HARMONIA

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'ESTELLE RUSSELL'

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/harmoniachronicl00alla_0

HARMONIA: A CHRONICLE.

HARMONIA

A Chronicle

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ESTELLE RUSSELL," "JUNIA," "THE NEW VIRGINIANS"
"THE PRIVATE LIFE OF GALILEO," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK
1887

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS,
LONDON AND BUNGAY.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

MRS. ELLACOMBE SPEAKS HER MIND 1

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD MAN DOES NOT LIKE IT 27

CHAPTER III.

WILL YOU TRY AGAIN? 40

CHAPTER IV.

A LECTURE 64

CHAPTER V.

MRS. MACFARLANE'S STORY 84

CHAPTER VI.

PAGE
STRIPED GARMENTS 106

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GARLICK RINGS THE BELL 123

CHAPTER VIII.

AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR? 135

CHAPTER IX.

AUNT PHŒBE 146

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH SMUT IS INTRODUCED 157

CHAPTER XI.

A KALMIA PATCH 175

CHAPTER XII.

DISCORDIA 184

CHAPTER XIII.

PAGE
WHO WAS THE THIEF? 206

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. DENNING APOLOGISES 217

CHAPTER XV.

THE EX-CURATE 233

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO IS SYLVIA? 246

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. BLOSS APPLIES THE DISCIPLINE 272

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. BLOSS BACKS DOWN 299

CHAPTER XIX.

SYLVIA WILL NOT TRY 331

HARMONIA: A CHRONICLE.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. ELLACOMBE SPEAKS HER MIND.

As George Pennefather had gone straight to the station after seeing Mary, Mr. and Mrs. Ellacombe were left in ignorance of the manner in which his wooing had sped, till they should learn it from Mary herself. The old man had expressed no anxiety; had indeed felt none. There was no hurry, he said. If it was in accordance with the views of Providence, it would come to pass. If not, not. Mary had been a dutiful and obedient child, and he doubted not she would be a dutiful and obedient partner to the man she married. The rest lay with George, under Providence. Something of this sort had been said to George, and George had echoed the phrase; but it seemed to his aunt that he looked as though he wanted no Providence to help him. He had fully acquiesced in the necessity of obedience in the woman he married. He had laid his worldly concerns frankly before the parents; he had shown himself by no means niggardly in his intentions as to a provision

for Mary; but there were no pretty phrases about Mary having everything her own way. There was a certain hardness about him, even at his best, Mrs. Ellacombe thought. But it was part of his nature; something that must be made the best of. Perhaps he would show out better in his own home where he had everything to his own mind. What uprightness there was in George!—and what a pattern of sobriety he had been from his youth up!

Mrs. Ellacombe did not feel quite as sure as did her husband of Mary being such an obedient partner. Mary was one that could be led but not driven. She thought that if George showed himself too much the master, Mary would be apt to rebel. It will be seen that in her mind there was no doubt of Mary's ultimate acceptance of George as her husband. She had gone away angry with him, to be sure; but what of that? A girl sees a man in such a new light when he begins to talk of marriage.

Mrs. Ellacombe was too anxious to wait till Mary should speak of her own accord. She followed her to her room on her return, and asked point-blank,—

"Did you see George yesterday?"

Mary answered laconically in the affirmative. "He came to say good-bye," she added, as it seemed as if her mother were waiting for something more.

"Did he only say good-bye, Mary?" said Mrs. Ellacombe. "Nothing but good-bye?"

"Well," said Mary, hesitating, "if you must know, I thought he made himself very disagreeable."

"Disagreeable?"

"Yes, disagreeable. He asked me to marry him, and would not take 'no' for an answer."

"Then you refused him?"

"Of course I refused him! Would not you have refused him had you been in my place, mother?"

"That depends," said Mrs. Ellacombe cautiously. "George has a good deal to recommend him. He is smart, and he is well-to-do yet, if he has had losses; and his wife would be comfortable. There's something in that, you know."

"His wife would never dare call her soul her own," cried Mary. "There's a good deal in that, I know."

"Every man has his faults," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

"That is one I could not put up with. Besides—"

"Besides what?" Mrs. Ellacombe asked.

Mary gave a little sigh. How could she tell her mother that she would never marry any but a gentleman? She hesitated. "I don't want to marry anybody —anybody," she said at last.

"George did not wish to press you," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "He spoke very well, I must say. He is very fair and very right-meaning."

"Oh yes, no doubt," said Mary.

"He said he did not wish you to be hurried into an engagement."

"Never fear, mother. I'm not going to be hurried."

"George will make his way in the world. That you may depend on."

"He is welcome. But it will not be with me for a wife. I know the kind of wife that would be good for him. He wants a termagant; somebody that will make him shake in his shoes. Now, I'm fond of having my

own way, and I get it pretty often. But I am not a termagant. Nobody is afraid of me; not even the cat. She will put her paw into the cream-jug, and sit looking at me and licking it, and dip it in again as cool as —as a cucumber. And if I say 'Down from that table,' she only thinks I'm asking her to take a little more cream, and in goes her paw again. No, mother dear. The proper wife for George would be—Mrs. Haverstock's sister, if there is such a lady. I'll recommend George to look in that quarter, if he comes bothering me any more."

Mrs. Ellacombe laughed and kissed her daughter. She felt some disappointment, but she did not say so. If Mary could not make up her mind to look on George as a husband, why there was an end of it.

"I suppose father knows," Mary said, as they went down stairs together. "Oh, of course," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

"I hope he won't be trying to persuade me," said Mary.

"He'd be the very last man to do that. He would wish that you might be guided right. He might make it a subject for prayer; but he would never try to persuade you one way or the other."

"Mother!" said Mary suddenly. Mrs. Ellacombe looked up.

The girl's face and throat were crimson. "Mother, don't—don't let father bring it in, in his prayer to-night. If he does, with Cleopatra there and Mr. Raine, I shall die of shame."

"Why, Mary! What's put that into your head? Father wouldn't do such a thing," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

"Not if he remembered Mr. Raine and the darkey were there. But when once he begins—oh!—'twould be all very well if 'twas only us three—but he just shuts his eyes and forgets about everything except what's in his mind. Oh how I wish he would read prayers from a book! One would have some idea what was coming, and it would be so much more comfortable."

Mrs. Ellacombe could only reiterate her belief that her husband would never do such a thing. Not even for Mary could she venture to say a word to him. "It would look like wanting to tell him what he was to pray about. I don't know how he might take it; I don't indeed," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

Mary declared she would go to bed before tea rather than chance being made the subject of the evening prayer. It was in vain that Mrs. Ellacombe represented to her that in that case, her father would be still more likely to make her the subject of his prayer, and be oblivious of outsiders. Mary declared that nothing would be so dreadful as to be there and hear herself mentioned by name, and her concerns alluded to. At last Mrs. Ellacombe promised to say a word if she could. She found an opportunity before tea, and was as good as her word; though with fear and trembling.

"Ha!" said Mr. Ellacombe. "So she won't hear of it, eh? Well, well, there's no hurry. She's young enough to change her mind."

"She seems to hate the very thought of it," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

"Then she needn't think of it."

"You won't allude to it in any way? She would feel so obliged if you would not," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

"Well," said the old man, "I won't say a word. But why she should be so sensitive as all that, I cannot tell."

"Oh, Mr. Ellacombe!" cried his wife, "don't you know your own daughter yet? Mary is just as timid as a mouse about some things. Why, I had to ask her outright before she let out that George had spoken to her. And she never looked me in the face while we were talking about it. She is the most shamefaced maid I ever did see in all my born days!"

"God be thanked for that," said the old man. "Better so, than too much the other way. Bless her heart, I won't say a word to vex her."

Mrs. Ellacombe felt as if she had put her head into the lion's mouth, and had drawn it out again unhurt. When she told Mary that she had spoken as plainly as she dared, Mary hugged her tight to show the measure of her gratitude.

George had been gone little more than a week when Mr. Ellacombe got a letter from him in which he said that he was obliged to return to England, and that it depended on circumstances whether he came across the water again. He had bought a piano for Mary, and hoped she would think kindly of him when she played on it.

Mary, in dismay at the assurance of ultimate success in his wooing which such a gift seemed to imply, begged her father to write at once and tell Cousin George that she could not accept a piano from him But Mr. Ellacombe replied that he did not see his way to do such a thing. He was sure that George only meant kindness. He must know that the reason she

had no piano was that her father was not able to give her one. How could a man's gifts be thrown back in his face without offence being given? Besides, the piano had probably been sent on its way before George wrote the letter. Mary answered that she had been well content to wait till her father should be able to afford her a piano.

"Well, George didn't want 'ee to wait," said Mr. Ellacombe.

"If it had been different," Mary began. Then she stopped, and her father became aware of her look of distress. "If it had been different—" she repeated.

"Well, well," said he, "if George did want to come a-courting, there's no harm done. You ain't bound by anything he says."

"But if I take his gifts," Mary insisted, "it will look as if I was bound to him in some way. I feel exactly as if he were doing it to bind me."

"No call for 'ee to feel that," said Mr. Ellacombe. "George knows exactly how he stands, never fear."

The old man did at last yield to his daughter's entreaties so far as to say he would think about it, and with that Mary was forced to be content. But while Mr. Ellacombe was thinking about it, the piano was on its way; and before he had answered George's letter, a message came to him that a freight package weighing so many hundred pounds had been delivered at Harmonia Junction, all charges paid.

There could be no doubt that it was the piano. Mary declared that it might remain there with her goodwill, but was rebuked by her father for her petulant speech. Young maids, he said, were apt to quarrel with their

bread and butter. Even Mrs. Ellacombe, to whom Mary went in her vexation, seemed to think her over-particular.

"George meant kindly, no doubt. Many a man is sharp of tongue that's kind of heart. I think you'd better take it as 'twas meant. There's no reason why he should not give you a piano if he can afford it. Of course, if 'twas a ring or anything like that, you'd be obliged to send it back. But such a big thing as a piano, and he going back to England too!—I don't see what's to be done."

In such a small house, where each inmate can hardly help knowing what is being said and done by the others, it would have been strange if Raine had escaped hearing something of the expected piano. It was a word of the old man's which told him. He was in the parlour, helping his wife to move the furniture. "That will make room enough," said he. "I must thank George for his kindness. Why, mother, we shall be so set up we sha'n't know ourselves. Mary will be playing and singing all day long."

"I hope it will be an upright," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "I like an upright ever so much better than those squares."

Raine, who had heard all this without intending to hear, was motionless with astonishment for one moment. The next, he became furious. Had she not declared she loved no one? And all the while she must have been engaged to that cad! Why, why should she have deceived him?—He ran up stairs and began to pack his clothes hastily. He would go away and never speak to her again. Could a woman be so false, and so angelic

to look upon! If she were false, who could be believed? There was a fishing-rod of his down stairs and he went to get it. Coming in from the garden was Mary herself with a large basket of tomatoes. "I had no idea they were so heavy," she said, setting the basket down and stopping to fan herself.

Raine walked up to her. "I'll say good-bye, Miss Ellacombe. I couldn't quite make up my mind to stay here under the circumstances. It was a different thing when you—when I—supposed you were free. You told me so, and of course I thought——"

"What do you mean?" said Mary.

"You told me you were not engaged, and it seems you are. That is what I mean," said Raine, pale and panting.

"Me, engaged! Who told you that?" cried Mary, turning almost as pale as Raine.

"When young ladies,"—Raine began, with as much scorn as he knew how to put into his voice—"when young ladies accept presents of pianos and—things—from gentlemen, it does not need much telling. It speaks for itself, of course. Any fool could tell that. Only—why should you think it worth your while to deceive me—even if I had no right to ask the question—"

"There now!" cried Mary, tears of vexation starting to her eyes. "I knew it! He did it on purpose. I wish the horrid thing could be burnt up before it came inside this house, that I do!"

"Then you are not engaged to Mr. Pennefather?" said Raine, changing to abject humility.

"If you hint at such a thing, I'll never speak to you again," said Mary, taking up her basket with a jerk.

"Where do you want it put?" said Raine, putting his hand on the handle of the basket, and taking it away quite easily. The anti-climax was so absurd that Mary began to laugh.

"In the kitchen, please. That is, if you will take it as far as the kitchen door. I think mother is putting the muffins to rise for tea. She won't like your coming in, you know."

"I won't intrude on the sacred mysteries," said Raine. He put the basket down at the door and caught her hand.

"Say you are not angry," he whispered. "Say you forgive me."

"I'll forgive you this time," said Mary. "Only don't do it again."

"I will not. I'll never doubt your word; never. Mary," he pleaded, "be kind to me."

"How dare you call me by my name?" cried Mary, bridling.

"Forgive me. Ah, I forgot. When I worship you in my dreams you are always Mary."

"But you must not. Oh, Mr. Raine, didn't I speak plain enough? It cannot be as you wish. Never, never!"

"Never is a long day. As long as you are not actually married I will not give up hope. I must hope, or die."

"Oh don't!" cried Mary. For Raine had taken her hand and was covering it with kisses.

A heavy footstep was heard above, and Mrs. Ellacombe appeared at the head of the stairs with a clean apron in her hand. Mary sped away through the kitchen

door. Raine remained where he was. He stood aside respectfully to let Mrs. Ellacombe pass, and then went out into the garden. He could not tell from her demeanour how much or how little she had heard. He was so elated at knowing from Mary's own lips that she was not engaged to George Pennefather, that he seemed to be able to care for nothing else.

Mary spent the rest of the afternoon in her own room, determined not to stir thence, till she had accomplished a letter to Cousin George. After what Raine had said she felt that it was of consequence that Cousin George should know that she did not look on his gift as binding her to anything. It would have been pleasanter and easier could she have prevailed on one of her parents to perform the task for her; but she reflected that, after all, the way to have a thing properly done was to do it one's self.

The letter cost her much thought and many sheets of spoiled paper, before she could decide in what form to send it. She had neither the right nor the wish to hurt Cousin George's feelings; and she knew, though inexperienced as a letter writer, how a sentence which when spoken seems of no particular import, may seem terribly harsh when put on paper. The letter when finished, ran thus:—

"DEAR COUSIN GEORGE,—Father tells me you have made me a present of a piano, which is on its way, and will soon be here. I feel sorry that you have done this, because it seems as if you did not think me in earnest in what I said the day you came to bid me good-bye.

I really did mean what I said, and it seems to me hardly right to take a valuable gift from a person"—[Mary scratched out the word and put 'gentleman' instead—perhaps Cousin George might be offended if he were written down a 'person']—"a gentleman whom I have refused to marry. At the same time I ought to say that had things been otherwise, I should have been proud to accept such a present.

"I remain, dear Cousin George,

"Yours sincerely,

"MARY ELLACOMBE."

She would have liked to send this without questioning from anybody; but that was impossible, as the negro boy who was the usual letter-carrier had gone with the waggon, and her father was going to the post-office himself. She gave him the letter without a word, but he looked at the address.

"To George, eh! I hope you've thanked him properly about the piano," he said, turning the letter round in his hand.

"Oh yes. I've thanked him properly. I've written about that and nothing else," said Mary, trembling lest her father should want to read her letter, and suggest an alteration in this sentence and that sentence, and end by making the letter something quite different from what she would wish to send. But Mr. Ellacombe put it in his pocket without any further questions.

"That's right, that's right. That's my good maid," he said, patting her on the shoulder as he passed out.

Mrs. Ellacombe had not heard much, but she had heard something of the colloquy between Mary and

Raine. Her heart sank within her. Perhaps George was right after all. She took most of the blame to herself. They were both young; Mary little more than a child. Neither of them saw much company, and what was to be expected when a young man and a young maid saw each other day after day? Especially when the young maid was such a pretty maid as her Mary. But Mrs. Ellacombe knew—or thought she knew—that the human heart was a desperately deceitful thing. She ought not to have trusted to her own vigilance, or to Mary's sense of the fitness of things. She ought to have stood firm and not given in to Mr. Ellacombe. But now she would take matters into her own hands. She would tell Mr. Raine in plain words that he must go. A young man's salvation was a good thing to accomplish, but her daughter's peace of mind was of more importance to her than the salvation of all the young men in the world. They all had fathers and mothers whose duty it had been to keep them from falling into bad ways. Because that duty had been in some cases neglected, did it follow that she was to neglect a duty which was plainly before her? Mr. Raine must go. Yet the tears stood in the eyes of the soft-hearted woman as she thought of what she must say to him. She could not bear to say what might appear harsh, and sometimes the plain truth does appear so harsh! To Mary also she must speak. She confessed to herself that she was a little bit disappointed in Mary. If she had not expected much from Raine, she had laid great stress in her own mind on Mary's exceeding circumspection. And yet—she was sure—quite sure—that she had heard Mr. Raine's voice utter

the word "Mary," and she had heard the sound of kissing. She had hardly believed her ears, yet she was sure she had heard it,—not once, nor twice, but thrice repeated!

"How things should have come to such a pass is beyond me," she soliloquized. "I could have taken my Bible oath that she's never so much as walked round the garden with him of an evening. I did not think there was so much slyness in her. If it had been any other girl I should not have wondered so much. But Mary—my own Mary! ——"

Mary herself entered at this moment. If it was needful to speak to her it were well to do it now, while her father was out of the way. There would be, no doubt, some blushes and a few tears; but there was no need that he should know anything about them. It was all his fault that she had to say a word to the child, she thought with an angry tightening of the lip.

"Mary," she said, "I wish you would sit down for a minute. I want to speak to you."

Then Mary knew she was to have a "talking." In her childish days, when other children would have been considered worthy of a scolding, Mary got what she called a "talking." A few words of remonstrance, mingled with many kisses and perhaps a tear or two on both sides; that was the form Mary's corrections took. So that the words "Come here, I want to speak to you," caused instant searching of heart to know what offence she had committed. Her mother must have heard what Mr. Raine was saying. But was she to blame? Could she help it if Mr. Raine would be so foolish? She sat down a little way off with her

work in her hand to keep herself in countenance, and waited. There was a moment's silence, filled only by the ticking of the clock; for Mrs. Ellacombe herself was somewhat at a loss how to begin.

"What did you want to say to me, mother?" Mary asked at last.

Mrs. Ellacombe, in her anxiety not to hurt Mary's feelings, had been preparing a preamble that should lead gently up to the main subject. But Mary's question put the beginning of the preamble quite out of her head.

"I want you to tell me," she said, coming to the point at once, "whether I heard right this afternoon when I thought I heard Mr. Raine call you by your Christian name?"

"I believe he did," said Mary, looking intently at her work.

"Well, Mary, I am surprised at you. You, whom I thought to be a girl that kept herself to herself more than any girl I know!—"

"I could not help it," Mary murmured, blushing.

"You couldn't help it! And you couldn't help his kissing you, either, I suppose—I never was so—dumfoundered—in my life."

"Mother!" Mary cried, and she was on her knees in an instant, with her face in her mother's lap. "He didn't kiss me. Indeed—indeed he didn't."

"Well, then, my ears deceived me, for I thought I heard him."

"He kissed my hand—only my hand," Mary cried. "There's a difference in that,—it does not come to the same thing as if — you know it is not the same thing——"

"It's a beginning. Mary, let me warn you that no good will come of it, if you allow yourself to set up a flirtation with a young man like Mr. Raine. He may kiss your hand as much as he likes—or as much as *you* like—but he means nothing by it. He's laughing at you in his sleeve this very minute, for aught you know."

"Oh, mother!" cried Mary. "He is not so bad as that."

"How do you know? We know what he is, and what we are."

"That is just what I told him," said Mary, beginning to cry. "I—told him he was a gentleman and we were —just farmers. But I don't think he was laughing at me. I am sure he was not."

"That's what you think. You had better trust me for that. I know what the world is a deal better than you do."

Mary was silent, wiping her eyes. Then she said with an effort: "Mother, when father asked you to marry him, did you think he was laughing at you?"

"Of course not, child. When your father came a-courting he came in downright good earnest. No shilly-shally about it, I can tell you. He asked me to marry him straight out. No kissing hands nor any such gentified nonsense."

Mary's head went down again in her mother's lap. "He asked me to marry him that Sunday I was away," she murmured.

"Mercy on us!" ejaculated Mrs. Ellacombe. "That ever he should have entered my door! That ever——"

"I said 'No,' just as plain as I could say it," said Mary, lifting up her head. "And I said 'No' to

Cousin George just as plain as I could say it. And neither of them will take 'No' for an answer. And I do wish I had never seen either of them; I do," said Mary dissolving into tears again.

"Then you refused Mr. Raine?"

"Why, of course I did," Mary sobbed.

"Thanks be, there's no harm done," said Mrs. Ellacombe to herself. "Mr. Raine must go," she said to Mary.

"Of course he must go," Mary said. She felt that after what he had said this afternoon he could not stay with them any longer. Her father would very likely be vexed; he seemed to think so much of Mr. Raine. "He'll be laying the blame on me very likely, just as you did."

"Oh Mary, don't say that. We think of nothing but your good, day and night," said the mother, beginning to weep in her turn.

"I didn't mean it. Don't 'ee mind what I said," cried Mary. "If this is what comes of courting I want no more of it as long as I live. Didn't I say it would make things unpleasant if Mr. Raine came here to stay? I wish we had never set eyes on him," Mary repeated, with her head on her mother's shoulder.

It was Mr. Ellacombe's step outside which startled them. "There's father come back. And I've forgotten the muffins," cried Mrs. Ellacombe. She jumped up and ran to the kitchen. Mr. Ellacombe came in to say that the waggon was coming slowly up the hill.

Mary, with a determination in her own mind not to put out so much as a finger to help the piano into its place, retired to her dairy and remained there till she

heard her father's voice calling her. Then she ran out and hid herself in the barn, laughing, but still determined not to touch Cousin George's gift. But the sun was getting low, and there were chickens to feed and there was milk to skim for the calves, and she was obliged to go back before long, lest her mother missing her, should go herself and do her work. She had not been many moments in the dairy before her father's voice sounded. "Why don't 'ee come in?" he called from the parlour door. Mary answered that she had not finished skimming the milk, and the excuse was taken as valid; but at last there was no more to be done, and Mary went to the parlour.

The piano stood open, and Mr. Ellacombe sat by the window with the newspaper on his knee, looking at the evening sky.

"Now then," he cried as she entered, "come and give us a tune. Twilight's just the time for tuning up."

Mary went and stood in front of the piano for a moment without speaking.

"Looks handsome, don't it," said Mr. Ellacombe, pushing up his spectacles.

Mary muttered something that was not audible.

"Did Cousin George say what kind of piano he was sending?" she asked. "You didn't show me the letter."

"What kind? No, he didn't say what kind. What does it matter? What's the maid looking so cross about?" said Mr. Ellacombe.

"He's sent me a second-hand piano, that's all," said Mary. She turned and walked out of the room.

"How do 'ee know that?" her father called after her.

"Just look at the colour of the keys," she said over her shoulder. "I reckon 'tis as old as George himself."

Raine who had just come in, sat down in front of the piano and touched a note here and there. Mrs. Ellacombe, with her hands all over flour, came in. "La!" she cried, "what's Mary saying about its being a second-hand piano?"

"It might be third hand, or even fourth," said Raine sweetly. "I have a couple of meerschaums exactly that colour. It is a fine colour in pipes. I think I prefer piano keys white."

"It don't matter what the colour of the keys is, as long as it will play a tune, I suppose," said Mr. Ellacombe. "Some are hard to please. I knew a man who had a violin he declared was a hundred years old, and he was as proud as proud could be of it."

"I don't think that holds good with pianos," said Mrs. Ellacombe cautiously.

"Not much," said Raine. He played a few bars of a waltz and then rose and left the room.

He sat down in the dining-room and laughed. Mary's disgust at the piano was a source of joy to him. Presently Mary came in with the teapot. "What are you laughing at?" she asked crossly.

"Nothing," said he. Then he laughed again. "If Mr. Pennefather could but have seen your face as you stood in front of the piano!—"

"The piano indeed! Such a tin kettle," said Mary, tossing her head.

"When I give you a present, Miss Ellacombe, it will be something in the way of a diamond necklace: not a

second-hand piano. That is what I would give if I were not a poor beggar, you understand."

"That's nonsense," said Mary, going out of the room. But she smiled as she said it, and he could see she was not displeased.

Raine felt very happy, and talked all tea-time. He told hunting stories, and shooting stories, and made the old man laugh. Mrs. Ellacombe was in a brown study; and Mary feeling her mother's eye on her, drank her tea in silence, and hardly dared look up lest she should catch Raine's eye. It was quite right he should go, yet she felt sorry. If he would but be sensible and abstain from making love, how much better would it be!

When a thing had to be done, the sooner the better, was Mrs. Ellacombe's household maxim. When the old man rose to take a look round the barn yard, as was his custom, she detained Raine who was about to follow, and begged for a word with him. "All right," said Raine. He thought she wanted to speak about the board. He had the money all ready. He had made a point of having it ready for her, though he had by no means made that a point when he had boarded elsewhere.

"I hope you won't take it ill," she said, looking vexed and flushed,—"if I say that I don't wish you to stay after the month's up."

"Why, what's up? Are you going to turn me out?" cried Raine, laughing.

"I don't want to call it turning out. I'd rather not call it that, Mr. Raine. At the same time I must say it don't suit me any longer to have you as a boarder."

"Of course I must go if you don't want me here," said Raine. Then he added, "I suppose I may come down and see you sometimes."

"No, sir. That is precisely what you must not do."

"Why that's banishment!" cried Raine.

"That's as you please to call it."

"Well, I must say I think you're unreasonable."

"I don't think his lordship would say I was unreasonable," she rejoined. "Mr. Raine, can you look me in the face and say that it was his lordship's intention that when you came to a farmer's house as a pupil, you should make an offer of marriage to that farmer's daughter?"

"I don't suppose he thought anything about it," said Raine, who was slightly taken aback.

"Did you suppose that his lordship would give his consent when you asked her to marry you?"

"Never thought about it," said Raine.

"Then, sir, it's all the more necessary that I should think about it. I wish to do right by you. I certainly mean to do right by my own girl. I should be happy to see her well settled before it might please the Lord to call me or her father. But I should not be happy to see her among those by whom she'd be flouted and scorned. And her own husband ashamed of her very likely! No sir, not while I can lift my voice against it."

Raine burst out passionately, declaring that she was doing him wrong. He never could be so low, so mean, as to be ashamed of such an angel as Mary. He was ready to forsake all his kindred if he might but marry

Mary. What were father, brothers, sisters, rank in life, to him, compared to the joy of winning such a peerless creature! A very great deal was said in this strain, and there was a great deal of repetition, as is quite usual when a young man's feelings get the better of him, and his vocabulary is limited.

Mrs. Ellacombe let him go on till he had talked himself out. "Well," she said, "you would be hurt, like, if I was to say that you don't mean it,—now. Perhaps you do mean it. But, now and this day six months are different. You'll see some girl with a pink and white face, and you'll be saying the same thing over again to her. La bless me, don't 'ee think I know what young men are like?" This was in answer to Raine's agonised protestations of sincerity.

"I would marry her to-morrow if I were not such a poor beggar,—and if she would have me," said he.

Mrs. Ellacombe shook her head. "We need not go over that again. You see you can't marry her anyhow. And the sooner you go, the better for all parties. I wish you well, Mr. Raine, and I wish all this had never happened. And I think, if you would not be inconvenienced, I'd be glad of your room to-morrow."

Raine went out into the woods. After such a stunning blow to his hopes, he could not go up to his own room and sleep as if nothing had happened. Still less could he sit still and hear Mr. Ellacombe expound the Scripture and make the usual extempore prayer. When he had walked till he was tired he went back and packed up the rest of his clothes. He did not feel so desperate as he expected. Mary's anger at the idea of being engaged to her cousin was a great source

of comfort to him. Of one thing he was quite certain. He would not make an ass of himself because of her rejection of him. And as to Mrs. Ellacombe's prohibition!—he was very sure that there was no necessity for his considering it binding on him. She could not put Mary into a convent, and she could not shut her up. And, if she—Mary—could but be brought to love him, might not they two snap their fingers at all the fathers and mothers in the world?

Raine had a great deal of luggage for such a poor young man, and it was necessary for him to go to Harmonia the next morning to find a conveyance to take his trunks away. It was necessary also, if he did not go to the hotel, to find some place in which to bestow himself and his effects. Mrs. Ellacombe had said no word to her husband of what had passed between herself and Raine, and the old farmer's face expressed nothing but bewilderment and disappointment when Raine informed him after breakfast.

"Going away!" Mr. Ellacombe repeated. "And where, and why for, if I might make so bold as to ask?"

Raine replied that he was very sorry. Circumstances compelled him. He could not explain just now—

"If 'tis the board—" the old man began eagerly. But Raine assured him it was not the board. Only—he was obliged to go. He had settled everything with Mrs. Ellacombe.

"We part friends, I hope," he said, holding out his hand.

"The best of friends, as far as I am concerned," said Mr. Ellacombe. "'Tis a bit dull down here for 'ee no doubt."

Raine declared that he had not found it dull at all.

"Come and see us sometimes," said Mr. Ellacombe; and Raine assured him he should be very happy to do so.

Mary had hidden herself, he knew not where. There was no use in lingering, so he said good-bye once more and prepared to start. The old man, who appeared to be in low spirits, took his hat and stick and said he would go a little way with him. They took a short cut across the fields, and walked on, sometimes together, sometimes singly, saying a word now and again about farm matters. When they had reached a point where the path joined the high road Mr. Ellacombe stopped, saying he would not go further from home. Then, with sudden determination he cried:—"I cannot let you go without saying a word. I want you to keep straight—straight. I want you to keep in the narrow path. I want you to keep out of temptation. Promise me to keep straight, for your body's sake and your soul's sake, my dear young man. Don't 'ee think me an interfering old body; but mind what I say. Do 'ee now!"

Raine put out his hand and shook the old man's hand warmly. "I will," he said. "Upon my word of honour, I will."

"Ah, what's your word of honour worth?" cried Mr. Ellacombe. "What's anybody's word of honour worth?"

"A gentleman's word of honour is worth something," said Raine. "As a rule, you know. Of course there are exceptions. I hope I shall not prove one of them."

The old man held up his hand. "You must go in the strength of the Lord God, sir. That's the only power that will keep you straight." Then, throwing his arms out, he cried in a voice of passionate entreaty :—

"Lord God, keep him straight! Don't let the devil catch his soul like he's caught so many others. Keep his feet out of the pit and save him to glorify Thee. Amen."

His face was very pale, and his eyes were strained upwards. There was a silence which Raine dared not break. He began to understand now, that it was possible for men to have let themselves be burnt for what they believed to be the truth. He had had a theory of his own heretofore as to martyrdom and confessorship. He had considered it to be merely a matter of obstinacy. "It was all their confounded obstinacy, you know," he said once when explaining his theory. But there was something more than obstinacy here. Raine felt that there was the same stuff in this old man as that out of which martyrs were made. Given the cause, this man would go to the stake, and pray, and exhort, and sing hymns, till the flames consumed him.

But Mr. Ellacombe's arms fell to his sides, and his face lost its rapt expression. He was down on the earth again. "You must go on your way, and I must be going on mine," he said. And he turned and went slowly down the hill.

Raine reflected as he walked on. He had just given his word of honour as a gentleman : he could not break it. He knew well enough how it would be with him if

he allowed himself to remain in Harmonia. The deadly dullness, the monotony of the life there, would drive him back to the mire whence he had emerged. He would go and see Huish, who had settled two miles out of Harmonia, on the high road to the junction. "There will be birds by and by, and he has a couple of dogs, and if they are not worth much they will be better than nothing. I must keep straight, anyhow, because of Mary, even if I had not given my word to the old man." And as he thought of Mary's anger at the supposition that she was engaged to George Pennefather, and her frank contempt for his second-hand present, Raine became so elated that his demeanour when he reached his friend's little house was more that of an accepted lover than of one who has been just warned off by a stern parent.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD MAN DOES NOT LIKE IT.

For almost the first time in her life, Mrs. Ellacombe had taken upon herself to exercise her own judgment; and the immediate consequence to herself was that she felt as though she had a sin upon her conscience, which might perhaps have to be atoned for by and by. Yet she kept saying to herself that if it were to do again she would do it. What was any consideration compared to Mary's peace of mind? She was not sure yet whether she would tell her husband. He was so accustomed to be looked on as the final court of appeal in all matters, that there was no knowing how it might be taken when he should be told that a farm-pupil had been dismissed without his being consulted.

Therefore, on the principle that the "least said was the soonest mended," Mrs. Ellacombe waited to hear from her husband what reason, if any, Raine had given for his departure. But the first word spoken by Mr. Ellacombe assured her that no reason had been given.

Dinner was nearly over. The meal had been a very silent one. Mary, who had said in her haste that she

wished she had never seen Raine, was astonished to find that his absence made a difference. What a dull, heavy meal it was! Her father seemed buried in gloomy thoughts; her mother's face was under a cloud, and she herself felt quite low-spirited. Raine had always had some pleasant little word to say, which made the meal-time something better than a mere filling oneself with food. To be sure, what he said was never very valuable. It was as unlike the table talk of a genius as could well be imagined. There was not only no learning in it, but there was not the slightest pretence at affording even useful information; and the wit, if sometimes present, was by no means of overpowering brilliancy. Yet neither could it be said of him that his tongue was like the clack of a mill. He had the gift—a gift which does not always depend on the greatness of a man's brains—of making things pleasant all round. He had the happy knack of setting the conversational ball rolling, and of listening as if he felt interested in the recital of those commonplace occurences which fill the lives of people whose horizon is bounded by their daily wants and daily occupations; and now he was gone there was nobody to do it, so that the old-time silence reigned, and each one ate, and drank, and made an end of it. Mr. Ellacombe, who had been warned beforehand by various of his Harmonia acquaintances that he would find him farm-pupil a hard case, had been wont to speak of Raine as a very biddable young man, being unaware of course how much of his docility was owing to the silken leash by which he was held by Dan Cupid. Mr. Ellacombe could hardly have made any special statement as to Raine's merits as a guest,

but he was vaguely conscious at this particular dinner time of something being wanting to his comfort. The victuals were as good as usual; yet there was a lack of the appreciation with which he was wont to greet, first the meat and then the pudding, after a long morning spent out of doors. He looked round and said at last with a sigh :—"Seems whisht like without Mr. Raine."

Mrs. Ellacombe reddened, but said nothing. She looked at Mary, and Mary answered for her: "It does seem whisht. We are like a quaker's meeting"

"Well," said Mr. Ellacombe after a pause, "he was free to go. I had no power to detain him. But I'm sorry: I'm sorry. I had hoped better things of him, and now, as like as not, he'll fall back into bad ways."

"Let us hope not," his wife and daughter exclaimed together. Mr. Ellacombe shook his head. "Idleness, idleness," he muttered. "What else should be expected? If he had to work hard for his living it would be better for him. It is the saving of many a man that he has to bear the yoke in his youth."

"There's a talk now," said Mrs. Ellacombe, "that folks fall into bad ways because they are worked too hard."

But Mr. Ellacombe was in no spirits for argument.

"He was free to go, of course, but his going is a burden on my mind. Seems to me we tried to make things pleasant to him, but I suppose 'twas dull for such as he."

"You did all you could, father," Mary said.

"I think I did; but I daren't be sure. He said he made it all right with 'ee about the board," he added, addressing his wife. It was a relief to her to

hear him ask about a sordid, earthly matter, and she replied readily that everything was quite right. She did not enter into detail. It was not necessary to tell Mr. Ellacombe that Raine had wished to pay to the end of the month, and that she had refused to take a farthing beyond the day of his departure. She rose and called the servant to clear the table. That was the signal for Mr. Ellacombe to betake himself to the parlour for his after-dinner nap, and for Mary to go about her small household concerns. Mrs. Ellacombe went about hers full of compunction at her husband's vexation; yet still with the feeling that she had done the right thing. She had not decided within herself whether or not to tell her husband of the reason of Raine's departure, but she had decided that if he were angry on being told, she must bear his anger with what fortitude she might, and feel that she was suffering for Mary's sake.

But when at the evening worship the old man made his prayer one long, impassioned entreaty for the bodily and spiritual welfare of Raine: when he cried aloud with strong crying and tears, beseeching the Lord's compassion for the poor weak soul who was resting on that rotten reed—a gentleman's word of honour—instead of the arm of Him Who alone was mighty to save, then for one moment Mrs. Ellacombe's opinion of her own judgment, gave way and she cried heartily.

"Let us hope he'll be kept in the right path," she said, wiping her eyes, as they stood up when the prayer was ended.

"Ah," said the old man, down whose furrowed

cheeks the tears were still running, "I will hope. Yes, I will hope. But I also fear greatly. I have seen so many go down to destruction. And so have you, Betsy."

She shook her head with a murmured assent. For the moment she felt as if the responsibility of Raine's future well-doing lay upon her alone, and it was almost more than she knew how to endure. She went to her daughter's room when Mary had retired, wishing to talk the matter over with her. A thing that is hard to bear sometimes becomes less hard, for a little while at least, for being discussed from all points. It is something like shifting a burden from the right shoulder to the left. The burden is on the same back, but one set of muscles is relieved for a moment.

"If I had known beforehand," she said to Mary, "that father would take on so, I don't think I should ever have dared to say a word to Mr. Raine."

Mary did not answer immediately, Youth is often hard where age is tender. Mary was wondering at her mother's faint-heartedness. How could there be a question that she had done right?

"Anybody would think," she said at last, "by the way father prayed, that he did not believe in free-will at all."

"Oh yes, he does; to a certain extent, of course," said her mother. "But those doctrinal points are all so hard! I don't understand them enough to talk about them. I've always had other things to mind."

"A man is responsible," said Mary, after another pause.

"Why yes! But I declare, child, I felt when father

was at prayers as if 'twas I who was responsible for Mr. Raine."

"Mother!" the girl exclaimed.

"Well, I did."

"I don't see how he could have stayed on, anyhow," said Mary. "I wonder he did not go of his own accord. That is what I should have done in his place."

"Now,"—Mary's face was quite hidden by her hair as she spoke, and she turned her head away,—"just suppose he were not so much above us, and I were to be prevailed upon at last to marry him,—I've heard of girls doing that because a man kept on asking—and suppose he were to do badly afterwards—what should you think then? Would you not blame yourself far more than you blame yourself now?"

"So I should," cried Mrs. Ellacombe. "There it is in a nutshell. I've got my duty to my child, and I must stick to it. I'm glad you said that. I saw it all in a way before; but now you've said it, I seem to see it all so much clearer! Bless you, my child."

She did not leave her till she had tucked her up in bed. She kissed her again and again and murmured words of endearment. It seemed to her as if Mary had lifted all the burden off her back. She was able, now, to harden her heart even against her husband's vexation, which else had been a hard thing to bear.

Raine meanwhile had arranged matters for himself so as to become at once a chum of Huish. "If I begin by staying at that hotel," he had said to himself, "I shall go on. And then I shall drop in for a game of

billiards, and that means beer; and more billiards, and more beer; and then a dram for a change, and then—I shall be a 'gone coon' before I know where I am,—confound it all! And if I do, she'll be sure to hear of it, and it will be all up in that quarter."

Huish, who had but lately set up for himself, was delighted at the prospect of a companion. He was a great talker, and for weeks had had only his negroes and his dogs to talk to. He was a handsome young fellow with a perpetual smile. When a schoolboy he had been hurt on the head in a maul at football, and this was taken by his relatives at home as a sufficient excuse for some slight eccentricities, and also for his having signally failed in the competitive examinations which nowadays are erected on every side as barriers to the invincible British youth. If Huish's brains had been half as good as his assimilating powers, he might have carried all the world before him. But when a young man's mind is so constituted that the rotundity of the earth remains an open question in spite of all demonstrations to the contrary, alas for him in these days! There may be props of some sort for a while; fathers and mothers and hereditary possessions. But, let those props be taken away, and he will fall at once into his proper place in creation, among the hewers of wood and drawers of water. There he will remain as long as his muscles stand, and when they too fail him, he will become a Lazarus. Alas for the poor numskulls in their fight with the world!

Huish had, as yet, plenty of props. A father, a mother, and a fair allowance, supplemented from time to time by secret gifts from his mother, who fondly

hoped that in this way she was making up to him for his disappointment in not entering the army; a disappointment which she believed firmly to be owing to the wicked neglect of his tutors, rather than his own lack of brains. He had tried for other things, and in every instance the men employed to coach him had treated him with the same neglect! But the failure to enter the army was the one which had been felt most acutely by Mrs. Huish. Long after her son had got over it, and had consoled himself with the thought that there were other ways of making the time pass, and that after all the army was not half as jolly a profession as it was before examinations came in, Mrs. Huish still mourned her son's hard lot. The army would have suited the dear boy so nicely, and he would have looked so handsome in uniform! Huish had no objection to her lamentations on his adverse fate, when they were accompanied by a five-pound note.

Raine, who had been long enough at the Ellacombes to become accustomed to the extreme neatness and orderliness of that little household, was conscious of an unwonted sense of discomfort after the novelty of Huish's companionship had worn off. When Huish, in his careless, headlong way proposed a partnership, he hesitated, instead of catching at the offer, as he would have done only a short time since. In some respects it was an advantageous offer. Huish's father, who was a man of substance with no drawback in the shape of title or position to maintain, was able not only to buy a tract of land for him, but also to make him a far better allowance than Lord Raine could make to his son.

As Huish said, when talking over his affairs, he never

need be without a five-pound note in his pocket. And Raine had laughed and wished he could say the same. But if Raine's pocket had the proverbial hole in it, Huish's pocket might be said to be full of holes. Raine had come gradually to feel a respect for people who made a little money go a long way, as did the Ellacombes and the Tregellases. He had been taught the rudiments of bookkeeping by Mr. Ellacombe, and he had been docile at that as at the other lessons connected with farming. He had even begun to keep an account of his own expenses, though it seemed scarcely worth while, seeing that he had only a hundred a year to spend, and when it was gone, it was gone, and there was an end of it. But Huish was of the opinion that accounts in farming were—as he succinctly put it—All Rot.

"Of course, one must keep within bounds—to a certain extent," he said, when Raine propounded a better way. "But if you know you want the things, and you must have them, why, you must have them, and pay when you can. Writing down in a big book how much they cost won't make them cheaper, will it? Well, then, what's the good of taking such a lot of trouble?"

But Raine was not convinced. "At all events," he said, "you ought to keep a book for each man you employ, and put down the days he works, and the holidays he takes, and the stores he gets from you. That's what old Ellacombe does."

"Oh, my dear fellow," cried Huish with a light-hearted laugh, "what an old fogy you are becoming! Why, I only have one man and a boy as a regular thing, and my memory is so good that I know everything they

have had, and how much I have paid, and how many days off, and everything!"

It is true that Huish's memory was very good as far as it went. During a *vivâ voce* examination he had electrified the examiners by the fluency with which he had reeled off a long and difficult problem in Euclid. Only—the diagram before him happened to belong to another problem. Huish always said that he had been treated hardly in that examination.

It was not in *vivâ voce* examination alone that Huish supplied instances of knowledge misapplied. His farming was conducted on the same principle. He bought sheep when it was the worst time for buying sheep, because it was a maxim with Mr. Macgregor, who, being a Scotch farmer, ought to know, that land, to return an interest on the capital laid out on it, should never be idle. In pursuance of the maxim that "confidence begets confidence," the field negroes had free access to the corn-crib, and the house servants to the store-room. It hardly need be said, that there was a bill at the miller's getting longer and longer, and another at the grocer's: notwithstanding which, the bachelors' hall was sometimes on short commons, and Raine found when the day of reckoning came that his share of the expenses exceeded by far what he had paid Mrs. Ellacombe for his board. Huish himself was startled by the length of his grocer's bill when it did come in, with the usual pressing request for payment, because the grocer was going up North. He threw it down, declaring he had never had half the things. When at last after repeated appeals he did pay it, it was with the help of Raine.

"You can take it out in board, old man, can't you? —unless the *mater* sends me a fiver pretty soon. I'd ask her for it, but she sent me one only a week ago. I meant to have bought a dog. Wish I had now." In this light-hearted manner Huish got rid of his debt. But when the miller's bill for corn, shorts, and bran came in, Huish almost lost his temper. "I'll tell you what it is," he said to Raine, "I shall be ruined if it goes on like this. I know I'm being cheated: that old Flippoto is an awful rascal. I shall have to give up farming, or else marry in self-defence. I wonder I never thought of that before. A wife, naturally, would look after things, and keep those niggers from stealing."

"With your income I should have married long ago," said Raine, "if she'd have had me."

After this confession it may be supposed Huish would not let him rest till he knew everything there was to be told. And if Raine did feel some reluctance at first, yet there was a subtle pleasure in speaking the name of his beloved and extolling her charms. He was not in the least afraid of being cut out by Huish. He felt sure that his Mary would never marry a man who did not keep accounts, and who only wanted a wife in order that she might look after things.

"Yes, I shall have to marry," repeated the artless Huish, when he had studied the *pros* and *cons* with all his little brains, aided by many pipes of strong tobacco. "I really believe it would come cheaper in the end."

Raine remarked that that was a low view of matrimony.

"I'm not in love, you see," said Huish, "so I can take the common-sense view of the question. I've a great mind to try my luck with Kate Haverstock. She's pretty enough, and I think she's practical. I saw her once cleaning a window. Now that's the sort I want."

"How charmed Miss Haverstock would be to hear you! Do you call all young ladies by their Christian names?" said Raine.

Huish laughed. "Everybody does."

Raine begged with much *hauteur* that Huish would make an exception in favour of Miss Ellacombe: and Huish, laughing again, promised to do so.

"And—you needn't mention it everywhere," Raine added.

Huish promised: but it was to him one of those promises which are better broken than kept, for he told all Raine's story as far as he knew it the first time he found himself at the Haverstocks. And, the story growing as it went round, Mrs. Ellacombe one day found herself stopped and congratulated in the middle of the street by Mrs. Macgregor. Mrs. Ellacombe was greatly agitated, and denied that there was any engagement or any likelihood of one, and vowed Mary would sink into the earth with shame if such a story came to her ears.

Mrs. Macgregor looked at her with her sharp eyes, and wondered why she should deny it, when it was such a feather in her cap. To be sure my Lord Raine was a very poor man, and perhaps there might be difficulty in making arrangements, and the engagement might be a long one. Mrs. Ellacombe could only reiterate her

denial, and Mrs. Macgregor went her way, adding to the story by informing every one she met that there was every likelihood of the engagement being a long one.

"If anything were to happen to the elder brothers," said that practical woman, "Mary Ellacombe might be Lady Raine. Of course she wouldn't stay out here in that case. But anyhow, if he marries her, she will be the Honourable Mrs. William Raine."

Her respect was increased tenfold for both mother and daughter, when she thought how much cleverer they had been than she had supposed. They must have been very, very clever, she thought, to hide their cleverness from her. Her respect for them rose to such a degree that she devoted a whole day to calling on Mrs. Ellacombe; to that lady's bewilderment, and to Mary's confusion and distress. For Mary being congratulated, was obliged to declare formally that she was not engaged, and never had been and never should be; and, as if that were not trying enough to a girl of sensitive mind, Mrs. Macgregor only believed her to be telling a half truth, and went away (at last) with the impression that there had been a hitch, but that all would come right in the end.

CHAPTER III.

WILL YOU TRY AGAIN?

TREGELLAS had written to his friend Trelease to bid him welcome, and had heard nothing more of him. Perhaps, he said to Edith, he had changed his mind again, or had gone over to Rome instead of coming to America. Edith suggested that perhaps his lady-love had relented, and the next thing they should hear was that he was going to be married.

"Women are always thinking of marriage—and love," said Tregellas. And Edith retorted that some men did the same.

Tregellas put up an addition to their house in expectation of this guest. He got old Flippoto, and Flippoto's man, and a negro who knew a little of carpentering, and in a few days a couple of small frame rooms were added to one side of the original dwelling. While he was about it, he said, he might as well put up two rooms as one, and no doubt they would come handy some time or other, even if not wanted as guest chambers. Edith said that she did not wish to go to the expense of furnishing more rooms than were

needed; but as her husband seemed determined to do so, she did not argue the point.

One day Tregellas was riding home after a colloquy with Mr. Ellacombe. The old man was much disturbed. There had been disgraceful doings at Harmonia, he said, and the *Jonesville Mugwump* had its usual sneering paragraph about drunken Englishmen. He feared that perhaps Raine in spite of his fair promises would let himself be led away by this roystering lot.

"If he would but take the pledge!—" the old man said mournfully. "He gave me his word of honour, but what of that!" Tregellas could only say that he believed one to be as efficacious as the other.

He was still on the main road, but was about to turn out of it, when he saw at a little distance two pedestrians coming along at a swinging pace. It was easy to tell by their dress as well as their gait that they were Englishmen. They wore Scotch tweed, and each had a *puggaree* wound round his hat. They also had tourists' knapsacks, and one carried a field glass slung over his shoulder. Tregellas thought, "Are these two more drunken Englishmen?" but one look at their faces as soon as they were near enough assured him that they were not. One was fair and sunburnt, and the other was dark and sallow; but the eyes of both were clear, and their springing steps told Tregellas that they were as much on the side of soberness and order as he was himself. He was turning down the path which led to his home when the voice of one of the men arrested him, asking whether they were far from Harmonia. Tregellas turned his horse sharp round and was at the speaker's side in an instant. "Bob

Trelease?" he said interrogatively. Then there was a handshaking and a hearty greeting, and Tregellas felt his heart warm to his friend. What cared he whether Trelease was in the Church or out of it? He had just come from the old country. Then Trelease turned and introduced his companion as Dr. Bontecoe; and there was more handshaking, and Tregellas bade them both come home with him. Out in the wilds an Englishman learns to practise hospitality, and would as soon think of asking his friend to pay for his dinner as of allowing his friend's friend to go to an hotel.

They made objections, of course. All Englishmen do that, at first; though, to their credit be it said, they soon come to believe in this sort of backwoods hospitality, and to practise it themselves. So Trelease hesitated and said he would go to the hotel and get rid of the stains of travel, and come to-morrow to be presented to Mrs. Tregellas. And the man introduced as Dr. Bontecoe murmured that it was very kind of Tregellas, but he couldn't think of giving so much trouble, and so forth.

Tregellas declared that it was bosh to talk of going to the hotel. They did not treat friends like that out there.

"You just take us as we are, and we take you as you are," he said. "You won't find servants in livery at our diggings, nor grand appointments of any kind. But such as we have, we give you. Come along."

They went along. Tregellas knotted up his horse's bridle, and the beast walked leisurely in front. Then he produced a twist of tobacco and supplied his friends' pipes and his own. Dr. Bontecoe opened his mouth

once, to say he preferred this to the perfumed stuff he had bought in New York, and then he fell a little behind, while Tregellas and his friend went on, chatting as they went about old times, and who was married and who was dead.

"And you—you appear to be content, old fellow?" said Bob Trelease at last.

Harry threw back his head and laughed. "Content? Wait till you have seen my wife."

When the roof of the little house was pointed out by Tregellas—and he told with glee how he had helped to build it with his own hands—Trelease and Dr. Bontecoe by one consent stopped smoking. They ought to have remembered, they said, that Mrs. Tregellas would probably object to tobacco smoke. Most ladies did. Tregellas assured them his wife liked tobacco smoke. Dr. Bontecoe remarked with a tinge of sarcasm that he had heard ladies say that before they were married.

"There is none of that humbug about *my* wife," said Harry with a superior air. "By the bye, when did you breakfast, you two?"

They acknowledged that they had eaten a breakfast at six o'clock. Trelease added that, though he considered himself an early riser, breakfast at six was rather too early for him. When Tregellas told him that he and his wife had breakfasted at six every morning since his house had been built, Trelease began to think that his friend must indeed have married a paragon.

At the house door stood Edith in a print dress and a little white apron with pockets, a fashion she had learnt from Mrs. Macfarlane. She smiled a welcome on the travellers before Harry had had time to introduce

them; saying that when her husband's horse appeared at the drawbars with his bridle knotted up, she felt sure her husband was walking behind with friends. She seemed to take it for granted that her guests were hungry and thirsty and travel worn. They saw her from the window of the room to which they were shown, flitting to and fro between the kitchen and the dining room, carrying things with more alacrity than her negro servant; who presently came to their door and called out sulkily that dinner was ready. They found their dinner to consist of a strange medley of English and American dishes, with a big teapot full of tea instead of beer and wine, and a good allowance of American pie, a viand which Englishmen take to quite as naturally as they do to original sin.

Tregellas was obliged to leave his guests in the afternoon, as he had workpeople to look after. In the evening after supper (when there was another big teapot full of tea) they all sat in the dark on the verandah; the men smoking, and Edith sitting a little apart, but within arm's reach of her husband. The two travellers had had time for a long sleep, a stroll round, and the smoking of many pipes; and they might have imagined they had come to a land where it was always afternoon, but for the steady thud of the woodman's axe where Tregellas was having some land cleared. Also, they had helped Edith to water her one flower bed, and had begun to feel quite at home.

They had walked far enough to see the mountain view which had charmed Edith's eyes when her husband brought her the first time to see the place. They, too, were charmed, and Trelease was enthusiastic

in his expression of the pleasure it afforded him, and declared that he could not conceive of a better country to settle in.

"Plenty of time," Tregellas said. "The country won't run away, and I don't expect many more to come out this year; the spring is the great time for people looking for a place to settle in. But," he added, turning to Dr. Bontecoe, "here is a chance for a medical man. There is not a doctor nearer than thirty miles. If a man gets his leg broken or his head smashed, he sends for old Flippoto, and if old Flippoto doesn't patch him up properly, he thinks the moon was against him; it was in the dark of the 'moon,' or some such rubbish. And as for fevers and other ailments, if they are to get well, they think they can get well just as easily without the doctor as with him; and, if they are to die, why not save the expense of a doctor? But of course, now we English are coming out here, we are bound to have a doctor,—and why not you? I wonder a doctor has not made his appearance before; but I suppose the place had a bad name among the profession for being healthy. And healthy it certainly is."

Dr. Bontecoe said lightly that he would take the subject into consideration, though small hopes were held out to him of making his fortune. Harry was answering in the same vein, when he felt his arm gently pinched by his wife, and took it as an admonition to hold his tongue. But when they were alone he demanded the reason of the pinch; and Edith told him that she had found out that Dr. Bontecoe was the husband of Colonel Haverstock's eldest daughter.

"Well," said Harry, "why should I be pinched because of that?"

"Because, dear, I was afraid you might put your foot into it if you said anything more about his staying here until I had told you what I had found out."

Tregellas mused. "How you found it out without putting your foot into it is more than I can tell." Edith assured him it was quite simple. "While he was helping me to water the flowers I told him who our neighbours were. Of course I mentioned Colonel Haverstock. I said how much we liked him. Then he looked surprised, and asked whether this Colonel Haverstock had any family. When I mentioned the name of the eldest daughter he said, 'I married the daughter of a Colonel Haverstock some years ago. The Mrs. Bontecoe you mention must be my wife. I thought she had gone back to India with her parents. I am surprised that they should be here.' That was all."

Tregellas whistled. Then he said, "Well, it is not my funeral."

"Of course not," said Edith. "But how odd that he should happen to come here! He told me that he had been going to Australia and back for some years as surgeon to an emigrant ship. Then he had an illness of some sort, and was advised to travel for six months.—Harry dear, I have an idea."

"You always do have ideas. What is this one?"

"How nice it would be if I could manage to reconcile those two!"

"Take care!" said Tregellas. "For heaven's sake don't meddle. Let them manage their own quarrels, my dear, and don't you play the officious friend."

"As if I were going to be so silly!"

"Well, but look here, Edith. If you don't mind what you are about, you will be putting your foot in it."

"*You* would, dear, I dare say," said Edith sweetly. Then she twined her arm within his and said, "We are told, 'blessed are the peacemakers.'"

"Humph!" was the husband's answer.

"And she is quite young still, and she looks so unhappy."

"All her own fault, I dare say."

"Very likely. I think he is nice—but he has a temper."

Tregellas groaned. "How on earth can you know?"

Edith laughed softly. "My dear Harry, how do the inferior animals know things? How do all the cats in Harmonia know that you are fond of cats? In the same way I know that this Dr. Bontecoe has a good heart and a bad temper. But—oh dear!—perhaps he will go off to-morrow; and I shall not have the chance of doing anything." Harry's last word was that he hoped sincerely she would not have the chance.

Before dawn next morning Dr. Bontecoe was roused by a slight noise as of some one trying to open his door, which was locked. It must be explained that this door, like almost every other door in the house, opened on a verandah. It is a fashion in vogue among the natives in the neighbourhood of Harmonia. It saves the trouble of cutting a doorway in the wall whenever the increase in a man's family requires another room to be built; and it has other conveniences. Before Dr. Bontecoe was sufficiently awake to remember where he was, he saw a dark figure getting in at the

window. He jumped out of bed and shouted for Trelease, who was in the next room. The figure raised itself up and said in a warning whisper, "Sh—sh—sh!" and then he made out the shape of an old negress whom he had seen in the kitchen yard the day before. It was Aunt Phœbe, whose services had been enlisted by Batheenie as soon as she gathered from her mistress that the "white folks" would stay over-night. Batheenie lived in constant dread of wearing herself out, "tending on white folks."

"Hush yo' fuss, honey," said Aunt Phœbe. She went to the washing-stand and gathered up the jugs which stood on and around it. "You got ebbery watah pitchah in heah, I de-clar'; an' I wants 'em."

"Why the—mischief—didn't you knock?" growled the doctor from his bed, to which he had retreated.

Just then Trelease appeared, and asked what was the matter. Catching sight of a dusky figure in petticoats, he hastily retreated, regardless of Aunt Phœbe's exhortation.

"Don' be skeared, honey. It's on'y ole Aunt Phœbe, gittin' dem watah pitchahs." She went on gathering up the jugs. "Don' be skeared," she repeated in answer to a feeble remonstrance from Trelease. "You kin go to sleep agin, honey; breffus won't be ready yit for a right smart while. It's on'y fust chicken crow. Don' lock yer do' to-morra night," she remarked to the doctor as she passed through his room. "I's got to clar up arter dat ar triflin' gal, an' hit's mighty orkard for me gittin' in by de windah, wid my lame foot."

"What a savage!" cried Trelease. The doctor burst out laughing.

"Shoo!" said Aunt Phœbe lifting up her hand. "You'll wake Miss Edith, an' Mas' Harry 'll jes' rar, *I* tell you." And with that she departed, with the biggest water-jug on her head, and the rest in her hand.

After a day or two the two men talked again of going to the hotel, but again Harry declared it was impossible, and his wife seconded him with sincerity. So they stayed on, walking and riding about, and making Tregellas's house their headquarters. They could not have escaped, even had they wished it, making the acquaintance of Major Forepaw, but they remembered their friend's recommendation to take all he said *cum grano*, and resisted his most tempting offers: though, as Trelease said one day after a long talk with the Major, he had come to America with the intention of staying, and why should not Harmonia do as well at any other place? The major was equally pressing in his advice to Dr. Bontecoe. There was quite a choice of nice building lots, besides houses, finished and half finished, which could be had for a song now, but which would be trebled in value by the time spring opened.

"And why should you not stay in Harmonia?" Edith asked the doctor one day. "The place will fill up: Major Forepaw is right so far. And of course English people like to have a medical man at hand. They don't trust in Providence as the natives do."

Dr. Bontecoe said that in some respects Harmonia would suit him well enough. But his wife's family being settled in the place was a drawback. He did not suppose they desired to meet him, and he for his part desired still less to meet them. He had heard that the Colonel had settled in the Kangra Valley, somewhere

near Gopalpore. Had he supposed he should find them in Harmonia, that would have been to him sufficient reason for avoiding the place.

"But, as you are here ——" Edith suggested. "You have as good a right to be here as they have."

He laughed; and Edith was very sure he had a temper. "Oh, as to right, a man might as well be wrong as right sometimes, for all the good he gets by it."

"That is very true," Edith answered softly. She added,—"I see very little of Mrs. Bontecoe, but I always feel sorry for her. She must be still quite young."

He considered a moment. "Young? Yes, I suppose she would be called young still. She was seventeen when I married her."

"Seventeen? Yes, that is very young according to English notions." She smiled as she added, "I was past seventeen before I was allowed to peep out of the schoolroom."

"I dare say you were just as well in it."

"Very likely. A girl of seventeen is an inexperienced creature. Poor Mrs. Bontecoe! — You have no idea how unhappy she looks sometimes."

"Does she! — I don't know that it adds to a man's happiness, either, to have his home broken up."

"It must be a dreadful thing, I should think," said Edith. "It must be like — being torn up by the roots."

"Oh, yes. It's all that. But it couldn't be helped, I suppose."

"If it could be helped —" Edith ventured to say. Then she stopped.

"There is no help for it, Mrs. Tregellas," he said.

And there was an angry frown on his forehead and a cruel tightening of his lips as he said the words.

"Pray forgive me," said Edith. "I like Colonel Haverstock so much, that —"

"The Colonel is as good a man as I know," said Dr. Bontecoe. And presently he went off to the woods with his pipe.

Edith told her husband, when she had a chance, what she had said to the doctor, and what he had replied.

"Well," Tregellas said, "I should say you had put your foot in it pretty considerably."

"Not a bit, dear. There is a way of saying things! —Of course it is *her* fault, because she did not manage him properly. He has a temper. All men with that complexion have; but she should have managed him. Oh, don't growl, Harry. You don't want managing, dear."

"You had better not try it on," said he.

"But some men do want managing; or rather, as the French say, to be *ménagé*. Now I have an idea from the little I have seen of Mrs. Bontecoe, that she would think she was the person in the household to be *ménagée*. And that is a dreadful mistake for a woman to make at the beginning of her married life."

"It is very fine for you to say that," said Tregellas, "when you know you have everything your own way, and I dare not say my soul is my own. I am as much your thrall as if you had riveted an iron collar round my neck."

Edith put her arms round his neck. "There is your collar," she said. "Say you like it." And Harry was obliged to confess that he did like it.

"If she had loved her husband half as well as I love mine," said Edith, "she would never have left him."

Tregellas entreated her to take care what she was about. She assured him she had said all she intended to say, and that she should not take any steps to bring their guest into communication with the Haverstocks without his express desire. "How could you suppose that I was going to do anything so stupid!" she asked.

One day Trelease and the doctor had gone to get the letters, and were waiting while the postmaster sorted the mail, when a lady in a riding habit appeared at the counter and asked for Colonel Haverstock's letters.

Dr. Bontecoe turned, and found himself face to face with Kate Haverstock, whom he had seen last as a pale, lanky schoolgirl. She had filled out since, and was plump and rosy and sunburnt. She had never been considered like her sister, but Dr. Bontecoe thought he saw a likeness. It was nothing more than a family likeness, but for the moment it softened instead of hardening him. "If it were possible to begin again!" was his thought. But he quickly told himself that it was not possible; and he turned round, not intending to make himself known to Kate, who had, as he supposed, forgotten him. But Kate, who had a good memory as well as sharp eyes, exclaiming, "It is Rupert!" Dr. Bontecoe found himself with his hand heartily shaken, and was forced whether or no to address her by her name.

"I suppose you are Kate," he said.

"Yes, I am Kate. Oh Rupert, how glad I am to see you. Really and truly and without any humbug."

"Thank you, Kate," Dr. Bontecoe was obliged to say.

"I suppose—you—came out to see us. We are all at home," said Kate at a venture.

"Well—no. Our meeting is an accident."

Kate's countenance fell. "But you must come," she insisted. "I want to speak to you. She dragged him into the street. "Rupert, I wish you to come and see Florence. She is not at all well."

"I don't see how my going to see her will mend matters," said Bontecoe stiffly.

"It might, if you would but go the right way to work."

"I cannot coax and wheedle and pretend what I don't feel, if you mean that."

"As if I wanted you to coax and wheedle!—I want you just to behave like a man. Some men, some husbands, that is, are affectionate enough."

"Affectionate!—I used to be affectionate enough, I am sure. I never went in for being an angel."

"Who ever said that you were an angel? Just be a man, and come and see your wife."

Dr. Bontecoe frowned. "Remember, Kate, your sister left me of her own accord. I did not drive her away."

"She was a fool, and deserved to have her ears boxed. If I had been papa I would have sent her right back again."

"Don't abuse her. That will not do me any good."

"It does me good though," Kate returned. "Nevertheless, I feel sorry for Florence. She made a mistake, and she has been repenting it ever since."

Dr. Bontecoe frowned. It is not to be denied that when he frowned he looked very wrathful. A wife would have to love a husband very dearly not to be

afraid of him when he frowned as Dr. Bontecoe frowned now on his young sister-in-law.

Kate was nothing if not audacious. Yet she felt some anxiety when she saw how hard and cold he looked.

"It was I who made the mistake when I married her," the doctor said. "How was I to know that she did not know her own mind? If she had ever cared for me in the least she would not have left me."

"But she did care for you!" cried Kate. "I am sure she did. I was quite old enough to understand that. And I believe she knows her own mind now, as far as she has got a mind. Those very sweet-looking girls are never clever. But she cannot help not being clever. You should have found out that before you married her. If she had been clever she would never have been so—so tiresome and pigheaded; she would have known that when she married she would have to put up with things. I dare say you were disagreeable sometimes."

"Very likely," said the doctor. "I see my friend has got the letters. I do not wish to keep him waiting, therefore I will say good-bye."

"Let your friend wait!" Kate cried. "Do you think I am going to let you go so easily? Are you staying at the hotel?"

Bontecoe replied that he and Trelease were staying with the Tregellases. Kate, to gain time, launched forth into encomiums on Mrs. Tregellas. Bontecoe listened and acquiesced, and once more attempted to make his adieux. Then Kate burst out crying.

"Kate, let me beg you to compose yourself," he remonstrated. He looked round in dismay. Already a couple of small negro loafers had approached,

and were staring, open-mouthed and open-eyed, at Kate.

"Kate, Kate!" he whispered, "people will see you." The crowd was already augmented by a negro boy, with a basket on his head.

"Kate!" But Kate still wept, and the doctor stood undecided whether to stand by, or to go off and leave her. His own inclination, irrespective of time and place, would have been to give her a good shaking. He clenched his teeth in his anger at her foolishness, and bade the negro boy move on.

The boy obeyed. A negro generally does obey when a white man speaks in a masterful manner. But there was another boy coming slowly towards them, and after him a black man, and close behind the black man—horror!—an Englishman in a linen coat. And still Kate wept. "I did not think you were so hard-hearted," she sobbed. "I don't believe you ever cared for poor Flo."

Dr. Bontecoe muttered something, and one sentence at least was audible, for in his vexation he had spoken louder than he intended.

"Confound the girl!" was the sentence which caught Kate's ear. She began to laugh in the midst of her tears.

"We shall have her in hysterics next!" said the doctor. "Look here, Kate. If I do go, it is solely to oblige you."

"Oh, th—thank you, Rupert," Kate sobbed.

Dr. Bontecoe ground his heel into the ground. "She has no more self-control than a child," he muttered. "She is as bad as Florence—worse than Florence!"

He unfastened Kate's horse from the post to which she had tied him, and asked her—sulkily enough—whether he should put her up? But she sprang up unaided, and turned to him a countenance beaming with smiles. Dr. Bontecoe said a word to Trelease, and set off, feeling annoyed with Kate and with himself, and determined to make the coming interview as brief as possible.

"There is papa!" Kate exclaimed, pointing to a figure in the distance. "I know he will be glad to see you. He has often wondered, in a mournful way, where you were, and what you were doing."

Dr. Bontecoe said that he had been till lately employed as surgeon on board emigrant ships going to Australia.

"Then you have been at sea nearly all this time?"

"Oh yes."

"Did you like it?"

"Not particularly."

"If I had but known," said Kate, "what a fright I should have been in every time there was a storm. And so would Florence."

"I don't suppose she would have troubled her head about it."

"Yes, she would. You may think what you please, but Florence is fond of you."

"She took an original way of showing it."

"I admit that. But you were partly to blame too, Rupert."

Dr. Bontecoe was taken aback by the girl's audacity.

"Say it is all my fault, if you like."

"No, I will not say that, because I do not think it. I'll tell you what I mean. Women are like horses.

Look at this little mare of mine. I wouldn't ride her with a curb, and I wouldn't touch her with a whip. She doesn't want it, and she would resent it awfully. That is one kind of animal; and there are women like that. Now look at the lumpish creature you are riding. You might take my little whip and whip him till you were tired, and he wouldn't mind it much. If he could speak he would say that if you could stand it, he could. And what a mouth! A curb is the only thing he understands."

Dr. Bontecoe laughed. "I know all about his mouth."

"Well, Florence is that kind of—animal. Her master must be—her master. Florence takes after mamma." Kate reined her horse in and spoke confidentially. "If papa would but assume the command, and be master in his own house, I am sure we should all be happier, mamma included, though of course she does not think so. It was all owing to her that we did not go to Gopalpore. And now she has got something in her head about the Red Indians and the Lost Tribes; and oh! the letters she writes, and the pages of manuscript I have to copy, for one magazine and the other!—they are never accepted, of course, and then she writes to know the reason why. And then she has pamphlets printed to send round to everybody; and what money that costs!—I don't think we are a very happy family, Rupert. What with the Lost Tribes, and Flo's nervousness, and papa's low spirits, we are in an evil case sometimes."

"You look happy enough," said the doctor.

"Somebody must make an effort. If I did not try my very best, what would poor papa do, I should like to

know. There he is, wondering who it is I am bringing home. Papa," she cried, "here is Rupert."

The Colonel lifted his hat and looked upward. Then he hastened toward them, waving his hand in welcome.

"I do believe papa is saying his prayers, he is so glad to see you," said Kate, with a little sob in her voice.

When Dr. Bontecoe dismounted he saw—and was sorry to see—how much aged the Colonel was. He stepped firmly, but his hand trembled as he shook his son-in-law's, and his face was shrunken and full of lines, caused by a long course of worry and vexation. He expressed his gladness at seeing his son-in-law, and bade him welcome to his house. Before he entered, Dr. Bontecoe thought it best to explain that he was in Harmonia quite by accident, and that only Kate's pressing entreaties had brought him to the Colonel's house. "I tell you candidly, that an hour ago I had not the slightest intention of coming here. Only the accident of meeting Kate ——" He looked round, but Kate was gone.

"My dear boy," said the Colonel, "there is no such thing as an accident. And—remember that I am glad to see you at all times. I have no quarrel with you. You will come in and see Florence?"

"Certainly," Dr. Bontecoe replied. As they approached the front door Mrs. Bontecoe came out, expecting to see her sister. At the sight of her husband she uttered a shriek and fled indoors.

Dr. Bontecoe was more affected at this show of repugnance than he himself could have imagined. He stopped short. "Colonel, if that is the way Florence

meets me, I had better not attempt to speak to her. I will say good-bye to you here." And he held out his hand.

But Colonel Haverstock entreated him to stay. Florence, he said, was nervous, easily startled; but she had every desire to do right. She had had time to reflect; she was grown older and wiser. And he hurried Bontecoe into the sitting-room, where they found Mrs. Bontecoe in a state of great agitation, which Mrs. Haverstock was vainly endeavouring to calm.

The Colonel spoke with a desperate attempt at firmness:—"Cordelia, here is Rupert come to see Florence."

Dr. Bontecoe stepped forward and offered his hand. "How do you do, Florence?" There was more sternness than love in his voice, and Mrs. Bontecoe, instead of answering him, hid her face in the sofa cushion. Dr. Bontecoe's face at this reception was not good to see.

The Colonel spoke: "My dear Florence, your husband speaks to you. Let me beg of you to answer him. You are no longer a child, remember."

"Pray, my dear Colonel, do not oblige her to do anything she dislikes." Then the doctor offered his hand to Mrs. Haverstock. But Mrs. Haverstock, putting her hands behind her back, bade him cease from persecuting her daughter and begone.

"Gently, my dear Cordelia, gently," the Colonel murmured.

But Mrs. Haverstock, turning angrily upon him, asked whether he were not ashamed of himself.

"Never mind that now, my dear," said he. And he

bade his daughter give her hand to her husband and hear what he had to say. "Be civil, my child, if you cannot be cordial."

Thus admonished, Mrs. Bontecoe looked up and put out her hand timidly. Her husband took it and dropped it. He had a frown on his face, and she looked frightened. Nothing could be more unpromising for a reconciliation, as far as appearances went.

The Colonel suggested that he and his wife should retire and leave them together. A private talk might do much to clear up misunderstandings.

Then Mrs. Haverstock in strenuous tones bade her daughter beware what she was doing. "If you are false to your principles now, Florence, I wash my hands of you for ever."

"My dear," said the Colonel, "let us be calm."

"I will not speak words of peace," cried Mrs. Haverstock. "There shall no word of hypocrisy pass my lips. Do not require such a thing of me, Colonel Haverstock, for it will be my duty to disobey you."

"Left together, the young people might come to an understanding," said the Colonel, looking affectionately at his daughter.

"No!" shouted Mrs. Haverstock.

But the Colonel insisted. "Rupert is actuated by friendly motives, else he would not be here. I repeat, Florence, that if he has anything to say, it is your duty to listen."

"I am willing to let bygones be bygones, for my part," said Dr. Bontecoe.

Mrs. Bontecoe looked at her mother and began to whimper. "I wouldn't mind so much, if ——. But

Rupert has such an awful temper, and—and then he flings things about. He threw my *Family Altar* behind the fire.—You know you did," she added, turning to her husband.

"I confess that I did so," he replied. "It was bad form; but I fear I might do the same thing again under the same circumstances."

"You hear that," said Mrs. Haverstock, addressing her husband. "And you have the face to desire a reconciliation between your daughter and this man."

"My dear," said the Colonel mildly, "even if Florence's husband had burned ten *Family Altars*, that would not have been a reason for her leaving him. Florence may have acted under a misconception of her duty, but ——"

"If we could agree," Mrs. Bontecoe began, wiping her eyes, "I would not mind. But we did not agree; there was always something or other. And once Rupert did not speak to me for a week, and I was s—so wretched I w—wished myself dead," and she burst into hysterical crying.

The Colonel sank into his armchair and wept for sympathy. Even Dr. Bontecoe, hard as he looked, felt a moisture at his eyes, and a prick of compunction at his heart. He hung his head, and thought of Edith's soft speech about his wife: "She is so young, and she looks so unhappy." Mrs. Haverstock alone was dry-eyed and erect.

"Let us try again, Flo," said Dr. Bontecoe; and he laid his hand gently on his wife's arm. But she shrank away from him, murmuring that she saw no good in trying.

"My dear girl, do not say that," said the Colonel.

"Florence, beware!" said Mrs. Haverstock.

Mrs. Bontecoe was silent, and played with the border of her pocket handkerchief.

"If you could have a little quiet talk together," the Colonel suggested meekly.

"I don't quite see the good of talking," said Mrs. Bontecoe. "Supposing I were to go back to-morrow, Rupert might get into one of his rages the very next day——"

"I'd try not," said Dr. Bontecoe. "But I might, if you were particularly aggravating."

"You hear that?" she said, looking at her father. "Then I don't see what would be the good." There was a pause. Then she added, "And in this country you cannot make me live with you whether I like it or not."

"I never intend to try," said Dr. Bontecoe. "Don't say another word, Colonel, I beg," he added, for the Colonel would have spoken. "I have Florence's answer, and it is sufficient. She will have to beg me on her knees, now, before I'll take her back."

At the place where he had tied his horse he found Kate, sitting under a tree. Her eyes were red, and she looked as if she had been having a good cry. She looked up and said, "Are you not going to stay? Have you not made it up with Florence?"

"We are farther off from that than ever," said he. "I really did do my best, but I believe she—she dislikes me."

"Don't you believe anything of the kind," said Kate.

"She is under mamma's influence just now. Wait a few days till I get her under mine. Don't you know that Florence is one of those women who will always be under somebody's influence? Don't you know, besides, that mamma considers you one of the unconverted?"

Dr. Bontecoe laughed aloud. "By Jove!—and so I hope I always may be.—Well, Kate, you are a well-meaning little girl, and I'm obliged to you. But you see it was no good." He bent down to kiss her, and she said, with her hand on his shoulder, "Won't you try again, Rupert, when Florence has had time to think? She is not so quick at thinking as I am. She wants a great deal of time."

"No, child," he returned, as he jumped on his horse. "I will never ask her again. I have told her that it is her turn now. Let her come on her knees and beg to be taken back."

CHAPTER IV.

A LECTURE.

When it was known throughout Harmonia that an English doctor had become the owner of a small frame house in a central situation opposite the post-office, it was thought to argue well for the Major's smartness. The Major would add the doctor's name to his advertisement in the English papers, and that would fetch quite as many settlers as the name of the English clergyman had done. But in reality the Major had nothing whatever to do with the doctor's determination to stay. That had been brought about by a letter from his mother-in-law. He was packing up leisurely, intending to travel still further south, when Mrs. Haverstock's letter was put into his hand. He read it and tore it up. That afternoon he rode into Harmonia and purchased the house opposite the post-office. When he told Trelease what he had done, Trelease begged to be allowed to join him, and in a few days the bachelor household was constituted.

Dr. Bontecoe said a very few words to explain his stay to Edith. "I would have gone away, because my

being here would have worried my wife, and I have neither the right nor the wish to do that. But a man does not feel inclined to put up with being ordered off the place by his mother-in-law. That is just what she has done. She has ordered me off. If I were to obey her I should put myself entirely in the wrong: therefore, I stay."

When Mrs. Haverstock found that her son-in-law, instead of leaving Harmonia, had settled in the most central part of Main Street, she chose to consider herself insulted as well as her daughter, and summoned the Colonel to interfere. The Colonel declined, and there was a quarrel, if quarrel there can be when all the hard words are on one side. Kate declared her intention of visiting her brother-in-law whenever she rode into the town, and Mrs. Bontecoe declared that she would never enter the town as long as her husband was there. She hoped that her husband was only half as miserable as she was herself, and would have been much disappointed had she known how completely the doctor had put aside the little episode of their meeting, and how far he was from feeling that he had been in the wrong. The little frame house soon became a menagerie, a laboratory, and a carpenter's shop; a good deal mixed, and as untidy as bachelor houses usually are. (It had been one of the doctor's many small contentions with his wife, that she would be always hanging up his clothes, and putting his books back in their places, where he could never find them.) The two men were quiet enough; the doctor a little bit cynical now and then, but pleasant on the whole; and before long his little surgery became as popular a lounge for

the young men as the store before post-time or the Major's office.

Harmonia had had just time to accustom itself to the sensation of possessing a medical man, when a new interest arose. It was reported, and presently confirmed, that there was to be a lecture; not an amateur affair, but a genuine one with a real lecturer who was making a tour throughout the United States. Handbills were posted announcing that Mr. Pedro Molinos would on a certain evening deliver an address, after which there would be, if desired, a free discussion. Then came a postscript in a line to itself, "Ladies are cordially invited." This sentence caused much feminine conjecture. Mrs. Macgregor took the earliest opportunity of asking the Major what it meant. Was there to be a free tea? She had heard of a free lunch, but people could not eat lunch after seven in the evening. When the Major told her that she would perhaps be asked to relate her experience as a farmer's wife, she made up her mind that she would be there. She supposed that every one would be glad to know how she managed her poultry, and she would not mind telling: but she did not propose to enlighten the community with any professional secrets connected with her dairy. She left such foolishness as that to Mrs. Ellacombe, who would pretend that the secrets were open secrets, and that any one could make good butter if they only gave their mind to it.

There was a wooden structure which had been erected by an enterprizing citizen in the early days when Harmonia had been expected to blossom forth at once as a big city. This was before the drought and the strike.

Since then the heat had warped the green wood, so that the structure was no longer either water-tight or air-tight: but as there was neither cold nor wet, so far, nobody was hurt. In the days of its freshness it had been called the town-hall, because on one or two occasions it had been lent for a gathering of the citizens; and this was the place which was hired for the lecture.

Long before the hour for the lecture, the hall was filled. Some negroes, hearing of a meeting to be held, supposed it to be a "distracted" meeting, and crowded in at the back, because they wished to see how English folk would set about "getting religion." As their jocosity became unpleasant after a while, they were ejected by Mr. Macfarlane, and Huish and Raine were made special constables for the evening. It had been rumoured that during the discussion which was to follow the address, the desirability of a prohibition law for Harmonia would be brought forward by some fanatic, probably Mr. Ellacombe. It was felt of importance by the saloon-keepers' customers that if a popular vote were taken, no anti-prohibitionist should be missing. On the other hand it was whispered that the women would be allowed to vote too, as they did in Wyoming; and not a woman would be left at home that evening. A room was hired at the hotel, and taken possession of by all the white children in the neighbourhood whose mothers were too nervous to leave them at home. Here they played and slept under the care of the mulatto chambermaid into whose special charge Mrs. Macfarlane gave her own baby, who could only walk just enough to get into mischief. Mrs. Macfarlane herself had a seat near the front, and outshone every woman present in a hat

and costume got for the occasion from New York. On the platform sat Mr. Bloss, the Major, the postmaster, and Mr. Boniface. Mr. Boniface nodded encouragement to young England at the back of the hall, and young England nodded back encouragement to him. Their hearts were strengthened when they saw Boniface on the platform, for he was a man of weight. He was the real, though not the ostensible owner of the Harmonia saloon; he was the proprietor of the hotel bar and the owner of various town lots, and he had subscribed more largely than any one to build the church and the rectory. If there was any voting, he might be trusted to vote straight. What would become of the bar and the saloon if the prohibitionists should be in the majority? Huish, special constable as he was, declared that if Harmonia went "dry" he would shake its dust off his feet.

The Major looked at his watch, retired for a moment behind the partition wall, and emerging, introduced the lecturer as a gentleman whose experience was only equalled by his success. As the present lecture would touch on some aspects of the land question, it had been thought by the Board of Colonization of which he was a humble member that there would be a peculiar appropriateness in its deliverance, and it was thus that the valuable services of the lecturer had been engaged. He would not detain the audience further, but would have the pleasure of leaving the floor to Mr. Pedro Molinos.

Mr. Pedro Molinos stepped forward, bowed, was cheered, bowed again, and placed himself at the lecturer's desk. He was small and sallow, and wore a diamond ring on his right hand, which he ran nervously

through his lanky black hair. As he approached the desk, a tall man came to the door behind the platform, and leaned against it while he nonchalantly viewed the audience. Then he brought a chair and seated himself where he could see the lecturer's back, and the faces in part of the front row, where sat Mrs. Macfarlane and her eldest boy, Edith and her husband, and Colonel and Mrs. Haverstock. The Colonel had been offered a seat on the platform, but had modestly refused.

The lecturer sipped his glass of water and began :— "In the old world, my friends, many of you have perhaps been pained by observing at one time and another the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege. Your souls have been vexed—as my soul has been vexed—by seeing the vice and misery which spring from this unequal distribution. I take it for granted that, one and all, you have become conscious after slight reflection, that some better social state was possible. But the attainment of such improved social state may have been to you as insoluble, as far as appearance went, as the problem of perpetual motion, or the squaring of the circle."

The lecturer paused and looked round. He became aware of a slight smile on the faces of many of his audience, and wondered why. He did not know that all the ladies present had been supposing for about a fortnight that the coming lecturer was Spanish or Portuguese, and that they smiled now because his speech had betrayed him.

The Colonel and Tregellas too, looked at each other and smiled. "Peter Mullens," Tregellas said in an undertone, and the Colonel nodded.

But, as Mr. Pedro Molinos looked, the smiles died away, and his audience settled itself in an attitude of respectful attention which said as plainly as possible, "He has a pseudonym and he speaks with a brogue; but he may have something to say, for all that."

He went on with an increase of dignity and impressiveness:—"In the old world man is beset with limitations. On every side his right of way is stopped. Dare he pull down these barriers, there is a hue and cry, and he is hauled with ignominy to the common prison, and tried,—maybe by the very man who had put up the barriers—for trespassing.

Here there were sounds of dissent from the body of the hall, and cries of "Name, name!—Whereabouts did that happen?" The Colonel sat up, and Mr. Garlick rubbed his hair the wrong way, and looked as if he would like to speak. The lecturer took no notice of the interruption except by raising his voice, and proceeded.

"Yes, trespassing! On the ground which belongs to the Almighty!"

He made an appropriate gesture and paused. A clapping of hands and stamping of feet proceeded from young England at the back of the hall, which drowned the next sentence.

"Thus," he continued when quiet had been restored, "man is beset on every side, on the right hand and on the left. If he make a way straight onwards, ten to one but he is stopped by the cry of 'vested interests.'"

Here Mr. Macgregor, who sat behind the Colonel, bent his head and began to whisper; and there were other

dissidents in the body of the hall. But if Mr. Pedro Molinos noticed these signs of dissatisfaction, he probably felt them to be unimportant, for he continued as though his hearers were in complete sympathy with him.

"How many millions have toiled all their lives, and yet never called one morsel of land their own, till they received that six-foot plot of which even the land monopolist could not deprive them!

"But, my friends, let us look on a more pleasing picture. Here is a fair country that opens wide her arms to embrace the millions of whom it may be affirmed truly that the mother country has been a cruel stepmother. Here there are no vested interests. Here every one of you has a right of way, and none dare take it from you. Here none need stand humbly, hat in hand, asking favours of this man or that, for all men are equal. None is greater or less than his fellow. None has a greater or a lesser right in the eyes of the law; for the scales of justice are absolutely even. Here, let me reiterate, a man can dare to be personally independent, can dare to stand up straight and look his fellow men full in the face, can dare to carve out his future, and make his own path for himself, instead of stooping, crawling, in the narrow path made by some other man; worn deeper and narrower by generations of men. Such are the conditions of millions of lives at this moment. Such were, I doubt not, the conditions of the lives of some of you, in a land effete, corrupt, and hastening, tottering to decay. Well were it that all who have within their breasts one true spark of manhood should quit that land lest they also be involved in the common ruin."

Here a voice at the back of the hall cried "Rats!—Rats leave the sinking ship. Shall we be rats?" and other voices cried, "Three cheers for old England! Three cheers for the Queen!"

The speaker faltered, and well he might: for in response to this appeal a deafening shout rang out, which was echoed by the crowd of loafing negroes outside the open door. "Hurrah for the Queen!" shouted young England. "Glory, Hallelujah!" shouted the negroes, who conceived that the whole of the sitters on the front bench had got religion. No sooner was quiet restored than another voice near the door shouted, "Payter Mullens, ye white-livered Fanian, come out o' that."

Harry thought he recognized the voice of Mr. Garlick's Irish goatherd. Whispering to his wife that it was time to shorten sail, he rose and stepped on the platform. Coming forward, he raised his hand, and there was silence.

"I wish to say one word," he began, "in the interests of order and propriety. Let us remember that the entry to this meeting is free. No man is forced to stay here and listen against his will. Let us remember that. And—" he turned slightly to Mr. Pedro Molinos—"I would ask the lecturer to remember a certain homely proverb, 'Tis an ill bird that fouls his own nest.' I know not indeed, nor is it a matter which greatly concerns me, whether the lecturer be Mr. Pedro Molinos of Spanish descent, as it has been supposed, or whether he be plain Peter Mullens, Fenian, or ex-Fenian, as his unknown friend declares. But I desire to make him aware of this one fact, namely, that if we English here present have left our mother country, it is not because our

mother country has behaved cruelly to us. Let me take up a parable and ask, Why do bees swarm? Because they have increased to such numbers that the hive is no longer capable of holding them all. Shall the bees denounce the hive, because it was not made of India-rubber? There it is. It all lies in a nutshell.

"I believe I am expressing the sense of the meeting when I say that we settlers here, are filled, one and all, with a love to the mother country which will live as long as we live: with a pride in her great men, in her exploits; yes, even in her defeats! For when we look back we see that, thanks to her indomitable spirit, those defeats have sometimes been more glorious than the victories of other nations. Our pride in our country is the pride of sons. We refuse to be called England's stepchildren. I would entreat the lecturer to speak, as we hoped to hear him speak, of the capacities of this country, and of the means whereby we may turn those capacities to good account. On such a topic he will find us willing listeners. But I would beg him to refrain from abusing or belittling the country which we have—many of us—regretfully left behind. We wish to be law-abiding inhabitants here, but we need not therefore become renegades to the country of our birth. I hope I have not said too much. If so, I trust the meeting and the lecturer will pardon me. Having the honour to belong to Her Majesty's service, I could not sit in silence and hear my country abused in the wholesale manner adopted by the lecturer. Could I do so, I were unworthy the name of officer and gentleman."

Amidst a hubbub of cheers, cheers for Old England, for the Queen, and for Tregellas, mingled with hisses

for Mr. Pedro Molinos, and exhortations to him in a strong brogue to "come out o' that," Harry went back to his seat. Edith, with tears running down her cheeks, made room for him beside her and squeezed his hand under her cloak. Mr. Ellacombe was wiping his eyes, and Mrs. Ellacombe and Mary were weeping quietly, with a sudden access of home sickness. Indeed there was hardly an Englishwoman in the room who was not crying.

The hubbub at the back of the hall still continuing, and showing no signs of being quelled by the entreaties in dumb show of Major Forepaw, Colonel Haverstock rose, and standing at the lowest step of the platform, raised his hand. There was a sudden hush to hear what he would say; for the Colonel was popularly supposed to be so entirely under his wife's thumb, that he dared not call his soul his own. A ripple of expectation spread through the circle of his acquaintance, that before he had time to open his mouth, Mrs. Haverstock would bid him hold his peace, and would get up and speak herself. But Mrs. Haverstock sat still, and the Colonel spoke. "I beg to thank Mr. Tregellas for what he has said in the name of the meeting. Before we forget England may our right hand forget its cunning! I now beg the meeting to hear quietly what the lecturer has to say. If the matter is not to the liking of any among the audience, let such leave the hall."

The lecturer and Major Forepaw whispered together. It appeared as though Mr. Pedro Molinos was in some trepidation. He came forward however, looking pale: and with an apprehensive glance in the direction

whence the voice had proceeded denouncing him as a Fenian, he began :—

"We have been asked by various persons what was the object of the Board in founding this colony. The idea seems to have gained ground both here and in Europe, that the Board is a sort of 'Ring'; that in the minds of its members, the number of sections and quarter sections sold are all important; and the happiness—that is to say the success—of the purchasers—is nothing. There was never a more misleading idea. This Board is composed of philanthropists. Let me remind you that in the ordinary course of human affairs a man does not become a philanthropist till he has made his 'pile.' In his youth the hopes of youth take possession of his mind, love takes possession of his heart. In the fulness of manhood, heart, mind, and brain, are strained in the pursuance of success in the line he has marked out for himself. It is not till the heat of the day is over, when he has leisure to stop an instant and look round, and can see how much is lacking to his neighbours, that he becomes a philanthropist. Such is the character of the members of the Board. They are not all millionaires; far from it. But they are men, mostly greyhaired, who have earned their leisure, and who are bent on employing it in what they conceive to be the best possible manner; in giving a helping hand to those of their fellow men who lag behind; who, from untoward circumstances, have been handicapped in the race.

"Now let me say at once, that the object of the Board in founding this colony was not to make millionaires. I wish that to be clearly understood. If there are any

here whose aim in life is to become millionaires, let them take notice that they are not wanted here. Our aims are far higher than mere money-grubbing. We desire emphatically not to found a community of money-grubbers. Let the money-grubbers go to New York, or Baltimore, or Philadelphia, or even back to the old country. In London and Liverpool and Glasgow they will find an air and soil congenial; and crowds to clap if they win, and laugh if they fail. No, my friends, we have far other aims, I trust. We want to live close to Nature. Whosoever would live close to Nature must acknowledge her supremacy, and obey her laws. He must go out into the wilderness. He must turn his sword into a ploughshare, and his spear into a pruning hook. He must take a spade and cut a path to his own bread—"

The voice of the Irishman at the back of the hall interrupted the speaker, "Begorra, thin, an' mighty little use will yer spade do ye if 'tis gravel. Ye'll have to take a pick."

"How much more of this bosh, I'd like to know?" Mr. Macgregor muttered to Mr. Garlick. Mr. Macgregor had come to the meeting hoping to hear something about Messrs. Lawes' and Gilbert's latest Rothampstead experiments, and their applicability to Harmonia.

The lecturer continued, taking up his last sentence, "He must take a spade, and cut a path to his own bread. Whoso does this, in the sun and rain and sprouting of the grain, solves the problem of life, not for one but for all men of sound body."

Edith looked at her husband and smiled. Harry muttered, "Bosh!"

Had he been seated behind he would have gone away, but there had already been so much interruption that he felt it would be better taste to stay to the end. The lecturer went on :—

"It was Bacon who said, 'God Almighty first planted a garden.' That great philosopher never spoke a truer word. There is no employment so noble, so ennobling, as that of tillage. There is none so ancient, so full of dignity in all its ways and methods. As in the old myth, man, wearied in mind and body, beset by the carking care that follows close on those who pursue fame or wealth, touches his mother earth, and behold, he is healed!

"Thus, to you who have found the true secret—to all you who have solved the problem of life, there shall not be any need of a fountain of perpetual youth, like that so vainly sought by some of the first explorers of the South. They, alas! left all and spent all to seek it, and returned to those whom they had doubtless despised for their pusillanimity in remaining behind, woebegone and wrinkled in aspect, and tottering of limb. Which looked the younger, think you?

"This country is not the Eldorado sought for by Spanish militarists centuries ago. But it is our dearest wish that in this untrodden corner of the New World, where still remain some portions of the forest primeval, may be solved that world-problem that is vexing Europe and Asia, Africa, and even the populous cities of this great Continent. Here, let us hope, bread will never be wanting to the worker as long as the colony endures. Here, let us hope, each member of the community may make each day, a Thanksgiving Day. Here, may the

cry be, not the increasing, despairing cry of the Old World, 'Bread, bread!' but 'Enough. We have enough!'

"Let us remember that though no man has a right to a superfluity, it is each man's inalienable right to have enough. When each shall have taken this to heart, and made it a living article of his creed, then will that millennium be near which pious souls have longed for from the earliest ages of the world. Let it be your aim to bring a foretaste of that millennium here. Let there be no political disputes, no arid, ecclesiastical discussions, no social troubles and disquietudes. But when the labours of the day are over, let it be the pleasure of each to sit under his own vine and his own fig-tree, and contemplate the work of his hands, or else commune with our noblest poets and writers, who drew their best and truest inspirations from Nature. This is a lot within reach of every member of the community. This is a lot to be envied by the millionaire, by the aristocrat, by the scion of royalty."

Evidently the speaker had reached his peroration. There was a movement throughout the audience. Legs were stretched, and there were stifled signs of relief at the prospect of release. Some few who had toiled in the sun all day (while Mr. Pedro Molinos had been smoking, heels in air, on the shadiest hotel verandah) had yielded to the soporific influence exercised by the change from muscular exertion to muscular quiescence, and now murmured "Hear, hear," to prove to the rest of the audience that they had not been asleep. There were apparently but few more words to come. Mr. Pedro Molinos had begun to thank his hearers for their

patience in listening to him, when again the Irish voice at the back of the hall was heard, exclaiming:

"Now thin, ye blaggyard, tell us what ye did wid that fifty pound of Tim Donnelly's ye ran away wid."

Raine and Huish set upon the Irishman and dragged him into the street, reproaching him for his Punic faith. For he had been forcibly removed once, and had only been allowed to enter again, on giving a solemn promise to disturb the meeting no more.

Major Forepaw, while the ejectment was proceeding, had jumped up and asked for a vote of thanks for Mr. Molinos' address. This was accorded with contemptuous good nature.

"It has helped to pass the evening, anyhow," said Mr. Lovett, who was little in the habit of holding communion with great poets and philosophers. There was again a stir, as if the meeting were about to dissolve itself. Mr. Macgregor was grumbling audibly that the lecture was a humbug, and Mr. Ellacombe was saying to his wife, "Well, I did hope the friends of temperance might have had a chance of saying a word," when Major Forepaw began again.

"Ladies and gentlemen, our friend Mr. Enos B. Phillips will conduct a free discussion on the topic which the community has most at heart; the best means of attaining to that enviable state so glowingly depicted by the lecturer."

The person who had sat in the doorway came forward and bowed. Mr. Macgregor had made a few steps towards the door. He turned back, framing in his mind some question as to the value of the latest Rothampstead experiments in a soil and climate so

opposite to that of England; but Mr. Ellacombe was before him. Handing up a paper, he informed Mr. Enos B. Phillips that the question thereon written was one, the proper solving of which, was vital to the success of the community. And Mr. Enos B. Phillips, opening it, read, "Is drunkenness a curse or a blessing?"

Mr. Enos B. Phillips came forward and read the question aloud. There was a moment's pause. Then Boniface rose and said, "That ain't a fair way of putting the question. I reckon nobody's fool enough to argue that drunkenness is a blessing. If folks will get drunk, it's their own look out. Nobody wants 'em to drink more than they can carry."

Old Ellacombe rose with a smile of triumph on his face.

"I will put the question in another form," he said. "Will this gentleman tell me whether drunkards are usually the most prosperous members of the community? Whether drunkards are usually selected to fill situations of trust?"

"Nobody ever said they were," said Boniface.

"I will ask the gentleman another question. When he was building the extension to his hotel, this spring, was he not greatly hindered by his workmen going off on a frolic?"

"Maybe I was," said Boniface.

"Had you not to turn away newcomers because you had no place for them?"

"Well, what if I had? I should not be the first landlord who has done so, I dare say."

"How many did you turn away? Ten?"

"More'n that, I guess."

"Fifteen? Twenty?"

"Reckon it mout be between fifteen and twenty."

"Then you lost money?"

"I never cry over spilt milk."

"My question is answered," said old Ellacombe.

The audience had watched him as he drew out one admission after the other, as if he were counsel cross-examining an unwilling witness. A gentle ripple of laughter went round among the better bred of the audience in the body of the hall; but at the back young England, fickle as the wind, stamped and cheered and cried, "Well done! Go it, old man!"

Then Mr. Enos B. Phillips whispered to the Major, and the Major came forward and said that if it would give pleasure, Mr. Enos B. Phillips, who had just returned from Colorado, would relate the particulars of a visit he had made to Greely Colony, which was conducted on the strictest temperance principles: so much so, that in the whole township there was not a single saloon, or drinking resort of any kind.

Young England offered an opinion that Greely Colony must be a "beastly" place to live in, but was promptly called to order by Raine.

Mr. Phillips began, in an easy, colloquial manner, leaning on the desk.

"I suppose you all know what kind of a place Colorado is. To those that do not, I will say right here, that it is just as different from this country as black is from white, or day from night. I've heard since I got here last night that last year there was a drought, and that you are in fear of another this year. And yet the place looks green, the forest trees look

healthy, and they tell me all the drinking water comes from springs, and that there are plenty of them."

Mr. Macgregor interrupted:—"Yes, but half of them are superficial; and the consequence is, they dry up. That's just the trouble."

"Well," Mr. Enos B. Phillips continued, "in Colorado, taking it all round, there are no springs to get dry. It's rather a big place. There are one or two big rivers, and these rivers have feeders, of course. But as a country, I call it a dry country, a thirsty country. There is little water, and what there is, is not fit to drink. I'm told that the sheep there stamp their forefeet on the native cactus when they are tired of cropping the dry herbage; they bruise this cactus, and crop the succulent flesh of it. It just grows in round knobs, varying in size from two or three inches to half a foot across. Yes. That's the kind of country Colorado is; a thirsty land, if ever there was one. And yet, here is Greely Colony, flourishing and contented, with its schools and its churches and its newspaper, and no saloon. What's the secret? Prohibition and—irrigation."

The audience was thoroughly awake now. The speaker had the true orator's trick of seeming to address himself to each one in particular. There was some applause, and cries of "Go on."

Edith, looking at Mrs. Macfarlane, was about to say something in praise of the speaker, when she observed that her friend was pale and trembling, and that she had pulled her veil over her face. Earlier in the evening her little boy had chosen to come between his mother and Edith, and had long since fallen asleep on Edith's arm.

Mrs. Macfarlane bent her head a little and whispered,

"Don't lose sight of Frankie. Please don't lose sight of Frankie."

"Are you ill?" Edith whispered.

"Yes," the other answered. "I must get out. For God's sake, don't lose sight of Frankie."

She went out, accompanied by Mr. Macfarlane. He came back presently, saying that she had recovered as soon as she got into the fresh air. But she wished to speak to Mrs. Tregellas as soon as the meeting was over, and would wait for her at the hotel.

As the meeting must in the course of nature very soon break up, Edith went to her friend at once. The hotel was but a few yards off. When she entered the room which had been turned into an impromptu nursery, Mrs. Macfarlane was walking up and down holding her baby to her bosom. "Where's Frankie?" she asked. Then—"You will think I am crazy, Mrs. Tregellas. But don't—don't think so. Only—keep Frankie with you to-night, and to-morrow, perhaps. I wouldn't ask you, only I think you are kind hearted. And I—"

"I will keep him as long as you like," said Edith. "But I fear you are going to be ill. Shall I go home with you?"

"No, no, no!" cried Mrs. Macfarlane. "Take Frankie home. And don't let him go out of your sight, for God's sake. Is that coloured woman listening?"

Edith assured her she had seen her standing at the hotel entrance with a knot of servants, as she entered.

"I will wait till you are gone," Mrs. Macfarlane whispered. "And take care of him. As you hope to be a happy mother yourself one day, take care of my Frankie."

CHAPTER V.

MRS. MACFARLANE'S STORY.

EARLY the next morning Edith received a note from Mrs. Macfarlane, promising to come and fetch Frankie the next day, and repeating her entreaty to Edith not to let him out of her sight. Edith, believing that her friend must be on the verge of an illness, wrote back offering to keep the child with her as long as it might suit the mother's convenience. But the day after, before the sun was an hour high, Mrs. Macfarlane appeared in her usual manner, on horseback with her baby in her arms and the black boy Jesse as leader. She hardly waited to greet Edith. Laying her baby on the floor of the verandah, she flew to Frankie who had run out on seeing her, and covered him with kisses, calling him by all the endearing names that mothers use to their especial darlings. Then, rushing to Edith who stood by smiling,—"Ah, you think me crazy, I know you do. But you will understand, some day, and then you will know how grateful I feel to you for taking care of him when I asked you."

"Dat ar chile gwine to roll off di-reckly, Miss

Parthenia," said Jesse who stood with his arm on the horse's neck, grinning pleasantly at Frankie.

Mrs. Macfarlane snatched up her baby and hugged it. Then she produced a frilled apron from her hand-basket and put it on. "I know you didn't expect me so early, but I declare I couldn't keep away from Frankie one minute longer. I got perfectly wild about him in the night. Don't look scared, my dear. I'm in my sober senses, I do assure you. Tell me—" She came close to Edith and whispered—"have you not heard of children being kidnapped?"

Now it was Edith's turn to look pale. "Jesse, turn that horse into the pasture," she said. For Jesse still stood as if he were hired to stand at ease and grin at so much per month.

When the boy was out of hearing she turned to Mrs. Macfarlane and begged to know the ground of her fears.

"Make an errand for your darkey, that will keep her well out of hearing for an hour or so," said Mrs. Macfarlane, in a whisper. "You don't know what amount of slyness there is in a darkey. They crawl and creep round corners, and they can hear like—like wild turkeys."

Edith said that she believed Batheenie was deaf, as she seldom came when called, and often declared she did not hear the bell.

Mrs. Macfarlane made a gesture of dissent.

"I dare not open my mouth while there's one of them on the place, for I don't believe there is a deaf darkey, any more than there is a dead mule."

Edith went to the kitchen and told Batheenie to go across the fields to Mrs. Ellacombe's, and ask her

to let her have four or five chickens, frying size. Batheenie, delighted at anything which should destroy the hateful daily routine, even for one day, took in her hand a large cake of maize bread and a lump of fat bacon, and went off, followed by her children. Mrs. Macfarlane bade Jesse go with them and help to catch the chickens.

"Now we are safe," she remarked, when she had watched the negroes out of sight. "Now I'm going to help you clear up. I'll fix things for you. You look pale. You had better sit down. There has been nobody around, this morning, has there?"

Edith assured her that no one had been seen.

"Then that's all right," said Mrs. Macfarlane cheerfully. She insisted on doing the clearing up, as she called it: and made Edith sit still while she put away the breakfast things, swept the floor, and made the room neat.

"I'm afraid I scared you that night," she said. "And I don't mean to have you sick on my hands." In less time than seemed possible, the small household chores were done, the apron was folded up, and Mrs. Macfarlane was settled in a low rocking chair, with her baby in her lap, and Frankie at play near her.

"If you go out of my sight, I'll spank you," was her warning to the child. Then, with a sigh;—"It is rather a long story, Mrs. Tregellas, but I'll make it as short as I can.—You won't hate to hear it a bit more than I hate to tell it. You know how faint I was at the meeting the night before last? This is what upset me. That gentleman who got up and began talking about what he had seen at Greely Colony,—you took notice of him?

—he was my first husband. His real name is Homer Slocum."

Edith was breathless with astonishment. "Not dead!" she exclaimed. "And you have married again?"

"That is not the trouble," said Mrs. Macfarlane. "I was divorced, regularly; I had a perfect right to marry again. What troubles me is, Frankie. I don't feel certain whether his father mightn't claim him,—being a boy—don't you see,—if he knew he was alive. I don't know as a fact that he has the slightest claim on him or right in him, considering that he left me and him to starve, when he was but a baby, poor little fellow!"

"He deserted you!" Edith cried.

"Yes, ma'am, he did so.—Well," said Mrs. Macfarlane with a sigh, "our marriage was a mistake any way you like to fix it. But girls will do such foolish things!" She sighed again, kissed her baby, and went on:—

"We were married, just for a joke, at a Christmas party. We were a large party of girls, all full of fun and high spirits, and we certainly did have a big frolic that Christmas. It was at the house of one of my friends. I went home and thought nothing more of it. I was just fifteen. He sent me one or two letters beginning, 'My dear wife,' and I thought he was carrying on the joke, and I showed the letters all around to the girls. We all laughed till we were tired, and sometimes the girls, carrying on the joke, would ask me whether I had heard from my husband lately.

"I didn't meet him for two years or more. I had my beaux, of course, like any other young lady, and used to go out buggy riding, now with this one, and now with that. He—Homer—never wrote after the first, and I

forgot all about him. I heard he'd gone somewhere in Michigan, but 'twas all the same to me where he had gone, of course.

"I often have thought of that time. I was my mother's only child, and of course she thought everything of me. I wasn't cooped up at home without a soul to speak to. Ma didn't care for company. Some widows don't, you know. But I—well—solitude wasn't to my taste. I was as merry, and had as good times as any girl I ever knew. When I was seventeen, I had not a care in the world. Oh me!—

"It was at a party that I met Homer again. I knew him well enough, but he did not know me, for I had grown taller and slenderer. However, I was not going to say anything. The joke was over as far as I was concerned. But he found out who I was, and came up to me, and, says he, 'I suppose I need not introduce myself.' I just bowed. Then he began talking; telling me where he had been and so on. By and by somebody played a waltz, and he stood up and said, husbands and wives didn't dance together as a rule, but he'd like to dance with me this once if I didn't mind. I asked what nonsense was that. He said it was very good sense. I forgot what I said next, but anyhow there was quite a scene. I got as mad as mad could be, and declared I'd go home. I had a good cry before I went to sleep that night, for really it did seem like carrying a joke too far.

"Well," said Mrs. Macfarlane after a pause, during which she stroked the hand of the baby in her lap,—"Well, he came next day, and I would not see him. I told mother to go and speak to him, and tell him I

was determined never to speak to him again. I never could get any clear account from mother, of what was said on both sides, for she was so nervous she hardly knew what she was about. However, she did manage to make him understand that I was not going to have anything to do with him. And the first thing we knew was that he had brought a suit against poor ma, declaring that I was his wife, and that ma was detaining me unlawfully. I thought mother would go distracted, and as for me, I was hopping mad. Detained unlawfully indeed!—You see the trouble was, the man who had married us happened to be a justice of the peace, and that made it valid.

"Of course, we had to go to a lawyer. Now you must understand we weren't rich; only just well enough off to live in comfort, and have a frolic at Thanksgiving and Christmas and birthdays, and a fortnight at the springs just for the sake of the dancing. We weren't poor, oh dear no!—but we weren't rich enough to pay lawyers' bills.

"I'll say that for poor mother. She never asked me to give in. She said quite quietly, she supposed she'd have to sell the house and lot, and go into a smaller one: perhaps give up housekeeping altogether, and board around somewhere. But she never asked me to give in."

"It seems to me," said Edith, "that I would have died first."

"Yes?—I don't know about the dying. I never thought of it in that way. Perhaps I might, if I had been fond of any one else."

"But to be forced to take a husband in such a way,"

cried Edith. "Even if you were not fond of any one else, what an inconceivable humiliation!"

"Yes?—I suppose I didn't look at it in that way. So much depends on how you look at things,—don't it?"

"No doubt," said Edith.

"Well, as I said, mother never asked me to give in, and I never thought of doing such a thing, either. But then, everybody knew all about it. It was the town talk. First, all mother's friends came and tried to talk her over, and then they all tried to talk me over. I said I wouldn't be talked over, but they managed it at last. They put it in this way, Here was I, going to let mother bring herself to poverty, just because I chose to be notional. He was very much in love with me, they said,—you see he'd been artful enough to talk over some of the old ladies—and the only reason that he didn't claim me two years back—so they said—was that he had not got a settled position. 'Twas during an election campaign, and he was running for some office or other, which he did not get after all: and he didn't wish to go to housekeeping till he had enough to keep a wife in proper comfort. So they actually made out that it was his fondness for me that made him go away and say nothing for two years: and I—oh—I was ungrateful. Ungrateful!—Think of that. Don't you think that was calculated to make a girl mad?

"And then there were those letters!—I had burnt them, you bet!—after his claiming me as his wife. But I had shown them to my friends first. And he was going to bring every one of those girls into court, and put them on the witness-stand, and make them testify to the contents of those letters.

"Well," said Mrs. Macfarlane, with another sigh, "I don't know that I should have given in, even then, if it had not been for grandpa. Grandpa was a lawyer, though he had not practised for years. And Homer—being a lawyer—got on his blind side. Homer must have been real smart to do that. Then again grandpa was a freemason, and so was Homer. Now what could mother and I do against two lawyers that were freemasons? Grandpa told mother that Homer was bound to carry the thing right through, and that if the court gave a verdict against him, he was going to appeal. He didn't care how often he appealed as long as there was any higher court to appeal to, because he would conduct his own case; and it would be a first-class advertisement for him, while it would be ruin for us. Well, the long and short of it was, that I gave in.

"But I stuck to it that I didn't believe myself married, and I'd have to be married properly before I'd live with him. He sent back to say he didn't mind; he'd be married a dozen times so he got me at last. So we had a wedding, and I sent to New York for my dress; it had a train eight yards long, and it cost a heap, I can tell you; and I had a dozen bridesmaids, and ushers, and a marriage bell, and everything as it ought to be. I really do think he was in love with me then.

"Oh, we were married that time, not a doubt of it, with a licence and a minister, and a house full of company. The girls all said it was worth while to be married to have such a sweet marriage bell. It was real sweet; all tuberoses and gardenias and smilax, from

a New York florist. My! and didn't it cost money, that's all!—Don't you have marriage bells in your country?—How odd!—What is it for? Why to stand under, of course, when you're being married. When there's a big crowd, it's mighty convenient;—keeps a space clear for the bride and bridegroom,—don't you know?

"So you don't have marriage bells!—All our best people have them, unless the wedding is very private and quiet. Girls would as soon do without their wedding dress as without their marriage bell."

"In England, people are always married in church," said Edith.

"Is that so? I don't think it would suit our people, much. Every one expects to have a good time at a wedding, and I don't know how we'd get the people to stop laughing and joking while they were in church."

"Would not the solemnity of the place stop them?"

"I guess it might, some," said Mrs. Macfarlane doubtfully. "But there would be plenty who would not feel like being solemn. I felt nervous, myself, as I suppose every woman does, but I don't know as I felt solemn, then; though dear knows I've felt solemn enough since. But anyhow, I'd made up my mind to marry Homer, then; and it was too late to go back on him, if I'd wished. Besides, there was all the expense to consider, and the talk.—Well, we were married that time, not a doubt of it.

"I don't know whether it was Homer's own smartness, or grandpa's influence, but anyway, before we'd been married long, he got the office of county treasurer, and we went to live at Ephesus Court-house. Pretty

soon he bought a lot uptown, and built him a prettier house than any in Ephesus. We had a carriage, too, and Homer got a trotting-horse that he used to brag was as good as any old Vanderbilt had. At that time he used to be very fond of me. Yes, I will say that for him. He was fond of me. Perhaps if things had gone straight, I might have ended by getting fond of him, too. I believe any man can fool any woman if he is only kind enough to her. A woman likes to be petted and made much of. Don't you think so?"

"I think it depends on her loving the person who pets her," said Edith.

"Of course, she must care for her husband, to a certain extent."

"To a very great extent, I think."

Mrs. Macfarlane looked up as if amused. "I do declare," she said, looking attentively at Edith, "I believe you are in love with your husband yet."

"Why, of course I am," said Edith, blushing like a girl.

"The idea!— Well, of course it's very delightful. And everybody says he's just as devoted to you! Ah, you are a lucky woman. Some women have been just as fond and as proud of their husbands as you are, and that has not prevented them from turning out scoundrels. I wonder what you'd do, if that were your lot?"

"I should die," said Edith. "I should go and drown myself."

"No, my dear, you wouldn't," said Mrs. Macfarlane with a wise shake of the head. "Of course it would be dreadful. But you would just live straight through, as so many others have done."

"Why talk of such horrors?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you turn pale. Never mind what I said. I don't think you need be afraid of Mr. Tregellas ever doing anything mean."

"I am not afraid," said Edith proudly.

"Only, my dear, don't you see, when a woman has lived through what I have lived through, no villainy seems quite impossible.

"However, I'll go back to my wearisome tale. We must have been married about three years, when Homer began to change. He was away from home a good deal, and when he was at home I saw nothing of him, and what little I did see, wasn't calculated to make me wish for more of his company. I wondered at first, because no matter how busy he might be in his office, he'd always be pleasant meal times. As time went on, I began to feel hurt, then I began to feel riled, and finally, I concluded to give up worrying about it. I had my baby by this time, you see, and that gave me something pleasant to think of. It seemed as if Homer and everybody and everything would come out right, just because of that baby. What fools girls are, to be sure!—I was no more than a girl, even then; not yet twenty.

"I should tell you that my mother died a short time before my baby came. She left me her house and lot and what else she had. It did not seem much to me then, because I had got into expensive habits since my marriage; but the time came when I'd have been thankful for the tenth part of it. My husband represented to me that it would be better to sell the property and invest the money in some other way. I did not wish to

do that. I didn't like the idea of selling the house where mother had lived so many years. My father had built it and fixed it up nicely when they were married, and she was ever so fond of that house. So I held back. However, Homer gave me no peace. He said I was a sentimental fool, and was very hard upon me, I thought. Why shouldn't a woman be a sentimental fool, if she can afford it? Finally Homer lost patience with me, because, he said, he knew of a way to make two hundred per cent. with the sum that property would sell for, and here was I, keeping money out of both our pockets because I chose to be so notional. Of course he could not sell the property without my consent. I held out as long as I could, but I had to give in at last. I think a woman would consent to anything rather than live a fortnight with a husband that would not speak to her."

"Perhaps it was the best thing to do if matters had come to that pass," said Edith.

"It was just the very worst thing I could have done," said Mrs. Macfarlane. "I thought at the time it was all right, particularly when Homer brought me a lovely enamelled watch from Tiffany's. For a little while everything seemed smooth. I asked him once or twice about the investment, and he said, oh, it was doing first-rate, but it was no use explaining things, because I never could understand. Homer hated explaining things, though he was considered a very smart lawyer.

"One day, he came home in a hurry, packed a few things in a satchel, told me not to wait supper for him, and went off, as I supposed, to catch the train. He had had a good deal of business at Washington, and I

thought it was some more of that, that took him away. And I never saw him again till night before last at the meeting.

"Before the next day was over, I knew why he had gone, and so did every one else. It was all in the *Ephesus Advance;* four columns of it. He had been betting, and he had lost heavily. Then he took the public money to pay his debts—racing debts—and that was why he wanted to sell my little property. He wanted to put the money back again. I didn't blame him for trying to set things straight, but for deceiving me so. If he had said, 'Look here, I'm in a hard place,' do you think I wouldn't have given him every cent I had? Of course I would. And if he would but have been satisfied with losing that money!—But no! He thought he was so smart, he'd be sure to win next time. So he went on betting, and lost heavily, and took the public money again to pay his racing debts. Of course, he intended to replace it, somehow. People always do. I don't suppose he meant to steal it, but circumstances were against him. It was no small item, either. Fifty thousand dollars.

"Well, I did not know what would happen. Some instinct warned me to hide as many of my things as I could, rings and bracelets and the like, and some real silver ware that had belonged to poor mother. That very day the house was taken possession of by the sheriff's officers. I couldn't stay there; it was too horrid. I took my baby and went to a friend's house and stayed a little while. But nearly every day I'd see something fresh in the paper, with the heading, *Embezzlement of the County Funds—Further Particulars.*

"It was in the paper that I found out he had defrauded me too. I was keeping quiet, thinking that I was bound to have the same amount in value, invested somewhere, though the actual property belonging to me had been sold. When his affairs were examined into, no trace could be found of any such investment. More than that, he had forged my signature and sold the rest of what mother left me. So there I was, penniless.

"I lived as long as I could on what my jewels brought me. Of course it was very little. Then I took in sewing. I suppose every woman who is brought as low as I was, tries to get sewing. It is a wretched life. I had a sewing machine, but I was not smart as some women are. I had hardly used it, you see; always had a seamstress to do my work. Then I tried art embroidery, but that ruined my eyes. People used to tell me I should do better in New York. I suppose they wanted to get rid of me, and that was a polite way of saying so. But I thought that, if I were to come to starvation, I'd rather beg a meal of a friend, than be alone in a great wilderness like New York, where I should only be one in the crowd of beggars. Besides, I kept on hoping Homer would write to me and send me some money. But he never did. Perhaps you wonder why I didn't go to grandpa. Fact was, if it hadn't been for him I'd not have married Homer. And when I came to think of all that Homer had done, I felt as if grandpa was my enemy. I don't know how it was I began to think of getting a divorce. Perhaps the idea came to me from my brooding over his neglect of me, and his meanness in stealing my money. At last I felt such a dislike to him that it seemed as if nothing would make me go

back to him; not even if he were worth millions. And what riled me more than anything was to see my poor little Frankie in want of good food, and not to have it in my power to give it to him. Poor child! He used to have such a pinched, old look in his face, in those days. No wonder he is so small."

Mrs. Macfarlane broke down and cried when she had got so far. Edith held her hand and shed tears of sympathy.

"Oh, hush!" said the little woman, drying her eyes. "You ought not to cry, you know you ought not. It's all over now, anyhow, and I shall not have to go through it any more."

"Yes, but you have borne it," cried Edith. "And I, I have always been so happy!—I feel ashamed of being so happy, when there is so much misery in the world."

Mrs. Macfarlane's eyes, all wet as they were, twinkled with amusement. "I never could see the shame of being happy," she said, "any more than I could see the joy of being miserable.—But oh, my dear, pray that you may never know what it is to see your child pining for bread when you have it not to give him. That cuts deeper than anything. It was that that brought me at last to determine to get a divorce if I could. I knew I had a pretty clear case, anyhow. For I had heard that Homer had settled in Canada, and that he had a lady with him whom he introduced everywhere as his wife. And I was told all kinds of things besides. However, I had no money to spend on detectives or private inquiries; and if I had, I don't know as I could have brought myself to do it. So I told my lawyer I claimed a divorce on the ground of desertion, and nothing else.

"When it became known that I was going to get a divorce, if you'll believe it, every friend I had turned against me. You see, most of my friends were Episcopalians, and so was I, and the Episcopal Church does not approve of divorce. So the rector came to talk to me. I listened to all he had to say, and I thought a good deal; but he was an old man, so I did not contradict him. When he got up to say good-bye, he asked if I would reflect on what he had been saying, and of course I said yes.

"I did reflect, and the more I reflected, the more I wanted to get free.

"I told you—didn't I?—that people told me about Homer's goings on, after he was gone. Often when I supposed him to be away on business he was in New York, throwing his money about like a prince—or a fool.

"But somehow, that did not hurt my feelings half as much as to know that he had deceived me about my property. A man who would forge his wife's signature would do anything. A man may be bewitched by a designing woman; but that only shows that he is a natural born fool. One can't help forgiving a fool as soon as his eyes are opened. And if his eyes are never opened, why, a wife must bear it as best she may. But, for him to have everything, and his child to want food!—If ever I wavered in my resolve, the sight of Frankie's pinched face held me to it.

"When it became plain to all the church members that I was going to get a divorce, the rector called a meeting of the churchwardens to discuss my case; and pretty soon a deputation came to ask me what I was going to do about it. I said my mind was made up.

Then one old gentleman asked me in a solemn manner, wouldn't I consider my child? I believe I blazed right up then. As if I wasn't considering Frankie all the time!—

"So I told them I was getting a divorce as much for Frankie's sake as my own. Being men, they couldn't understand that at all. They seemed to have a notion that I wanted to marry somebody else.

"I don't know what I told them then, I got so mad. As if I should want to get free just to put myself in bondage again!—

"Well, I got the divorce. It was a clear case of desertion for three years. And I got something else besides. I was excommunicated. My name was struck off the roll of church members, and of course I should have been refused letters of dismissal if I had asked for them. But I was too proud for that, you bet.

"I did expect that when they turned me out, they would turn out my lawyer too. But no, not a bit of it. Mr. Paige was quite an influential man, and a pillar of the Church. I believe they had a private meeting and talked him over; but that was all. They knew better than to excommunicate Ely R. Paige.

"Just one or two of my friends thought I ought to put a card in the papers, to set myself right with the public, but I would not hear of it. Of course every one who sided with the clergyman and the vestry thought me a very wicked woman. I won't say that they actually set false reports going in so many words, but you know how one person may put an idea in another person's mind, just by shutting his eyes, and shaking his head, and hoping this, and trusting that, and fearing

t'other. That is what they did. It got about before long that 'twas my extravagance had driven Homer to take the public money. Think of that!—Then it was said that I was a termagant, and that was why he did not tell me his whereabouts. But, supposing I had put a card in, declaring that I was a very good-tempered woman, what use would that have been?

"Mr. Paige got me a place as housekeeper at the new Agricultural College at Congruity. It was high time. Another year of art needlework would have finished me. I got fifty dollars less than the lady whom I succeeded, because of Frankie. But oh! it was worth hundreds of dollars to me to see him getting plump and growing a little. It was very little at first, and I know he has never quite got over that starvation time. The first day we were there, at dinner time he looked up from his plate and whispered to me, 'Ma, mustn't I keep some of this for to-morrow?'"

Again Mrs. Macfarlane broke down and cried, and then wiped her eyes and entreated Edith not to cry.

"How can I help it?" said Edith, "I do feel for you."

"I know you do. I couldn't talk to another woman in Harmonia as I talk to you. I don't know why, I'm sure, for I thought you were sort of proud when first I knew you. But you have a way—you seem to understand things. Oh, my dear," she cried, with a fresh burst of sobs, "you haven't any of your own, yet, but you can understand,—can't you?—how it goes to my heart, even now, to see Frankie so small and puny, and so quiet and old-fashioned in his ways, and remember that it is all because of that starvation. For a whole year he never grew. How could he? I used to dream when

he was a tiny baby lying in my lap, how he would grow up tall and handsome, something like his father—Homer is considered a fine man—but handsomer. We mothers have such dreams, you know. And after all he will never be anything but a puny little fellow. I think his mind is all right, don't you?"

"I am sure of it. I think he is a very bright child," said Edith.

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Mrs. Macfarlane, with a sigh of relief. "I'm always worrying myself about him. I never do about this one,"—nodding at the baby on her lap.

"Well, I declare I will not cry any more. It's perfectly ridiculous going on like this, and I ought to be ashamed of myself. I haven't had such a cry since I married Mr. Macfarlane. I don't know what should set me off now, unless it is my having been so upset. For two nights I have scarcely slept. Mr. Macfarlane wanted me to stay in bed this morning and have a nap; but I could not rest. I wanted to see Frankie with my own eyes, and so I told him. He was very kind. He offered to take me and Frankie away for a bit. But I said, no. Suppose I were to run up against Homer at the very first hotel I stopped at? Or suppose I found myself seated next to him on the cars, with no possibility of getting away for hours? And suppose he began to notice Frankie attentively in broad daylight! It was the way he looked at him in the hall—as if he recognized him—that upset me so. I thought of all the kidnapping cases I had ever heard of. Did you not observe that he noticed the child very attentively?"

"I thought he appeared to catch the eye of every

person in turn. I thought it was a clever orator's trick," said Edith.

"Ah, depend upon it, it was more than that," said Mrs. Macfarlane, shaking her head. "I tried to edge away from the child so that he might appear as if he belonged to you. I was hoping that he would not recognize me, for I must have changed terribly since he left me. But I don't know. Homer is so sharp. He has a way of seeing everything all at once."

"But," said Edith, "why should you imagine he would do such a thing as kidnap the child?"

"Because Homer is a man who is bound to have what he has set his mind on having. Have I not told you how he made me marry him? I don't believe he'd hesitate to kidnap the child if he felt like having him. I do not suppose any consideration for me would deter him. Why should it? And he would know that I would never give Frankie up of my own free will."

"Of course not. What mother would?" said Edith.

"I sometimes wonder," said Mrs. Macfarlane, "what sort of a creature I should have been, had I married Mr. Macfarlane first instead of Mr. Slocum. I should not have had all that experience of the seamy side of life, and I should have been ever so much happier. Being experienced is horrid. It simply means not believing in anybody or anything. It was the longest time before I could bring myself to believe in Mr. Macfarlane. He kept on asking me for two years before I would have a word to say to him. I could not bear the idea of trying matrimony again after such a terrible failure. But I did make my mind up at last, and I have never repented it.

He is not a man that says much. If it was to save his life, I don't believe he could get up and orate, and make everybody believe black was white, as Homer can. What did Homer talk about last night, anyhow?"

Edith replied that Mr. Slocum had given them a sketch of Greely Colony, whose basis of prosperity appeared to be prohibition and irrigation.

"Oh, he brought in statistics to prove what he said, did not he?"

Edith assented, adding, that every one appeared interested, and that she heard people saying that he ought to have been chief speaker instead of Mr. Molinos. She herself, though she disliked statistics, had been interested.

"Then don't you believe one word of it all," cried Mrs. Macfarlane. "I have heard him say that he could prove anything he chose by statistics, and that tables of averages and the like were the biggest fraud out."

Any further confidences were stopped by the appearance of Batheenie with a bunch of chickens fluttering in her hand. Edith exclaimed at her cruelty, but Mrs. Macfarlane remarked that Mis' Ellacombe's chickens were always nice and plump, and she loved fried chicken above all things. At dinner she was so merry that Tregellas declared she was like a volume of *Punch;* but she became tearful again when she was going away, and Frankie was lifting up his voice in angry protest because of her leaving him behind.

Edith, who had been slightly infected by her friend's fears, was reassured by her husband's opinion that they had no ground beyond the fancy of an impulsive,

hysterical woman. And when, a few days later, Mrs. Macfarlane came to fetch Frankie, she was almost ready to admit that she had allowed herself to be scared for nothing at all. Homer had left the hotel the morning after the meeting. He was talked of as a rising man, who would run next year for the New York Legislature. Such a man would not stay fooling away his time in a place like Harmonia. Major Forepaw said he would be in the White House one day, he was so smart.

"He may go to the White House or any other house," said Mrs. Macfarlane with a laugh. "When I got rid of him I got rid of a bad man, and nothing will make me wish that I had done otherwise. I'd not be his wife—no—not to be Queen of England."

CHAPTER VI.

STRIPED GARMENTS.

EARLY one morning Edith stood by the breakfast table, putting finishing touches to Batheenie's slovenly work, when she heard the galloping of a horse which stopped at the drawbars, and then the voice of Mr. Ellacombe calling loudly for Mr. Tregellas.

Tregellas had been out by early dawn, hewing down a tree which stood in the way of a road he wished to make to the mill. He was on his way home to breakfast, and presently appeared on the brow of the hill, with his axe on his shoulder. There was a hurried colloquy, and Mr. Ellacombe galloped off, while Tregellas came running to the house, calling loudly to Batheenie. He caught sight of Edith, and said :—"Tell her to get Clytie up to the bars and put the saddle on her, if she can," and then he rushed into his room and began changing his clothes.

Knowing that Batheenie had just gone into the woods with the negroes' breakfasts, and that she would sit and gossip till they had finished their meal, Edith took a bridle and some sugar, and went herself to the draw-

bars leading to the pasture, wondering a little what had happened to the Ellacombes to make her husband want to hurry away so early. The young mare was easily beguiled, and Edith slipped the bridle over her head and led her up to the house. By this time Tregellas had changed his woodman's attire for the ordinary costume of an Englishman, and he now appeared on the verandah with the saddle.

"What is the matter with the Ellacombes?" Edith asked.

Now Mr. Ellacombe's last words had been, "Don't 'ee frighten young missus." So Tregellas hesitated. "Oh, nothing much," he said. "I will tell you all about it when I come back." As soon as he had said this, he saw that he had said the wrong thing.

"Something has happened to us. Tell me immediately," said Edith, pale and imperious as he had never seen her.

Tregellas saw that he must either tell the truth or nothing, so he told the truth.

Mr. Ellacombe had heard from an English friend in New York that a certain banking house there was said privately to be shaky. This house did a good deal of business down south and, if it failed, it would be sure to bring down smaller concerns with it. The Jonesville bank was one which was named as being certain to fail if the New York house failed; and the Jonesville bank was the bank in which Mr. Ellacombe, Tregellas, and other of the Harmonia settlers, had placed their money, attracted by the high rate of interest. Mr. Ellacombe had ridden thus far out of his way to warn Tregellas. If they could reach the junction in time to catch the down

freight train which had an accommodation car attached, they might perhaps reach Jonesville as soon as the bank opened, and draw their money out before there was any panic: if panic there was to be.

This, Tregellas told his wife while he was saddling the mare and examining her shoes. Edith's hands trembled a little and her face was pale; but she gave no other sign of emotion. She got a twist of tobacco for her husband, his purse, a roll wrapped up in a napkin, and a revolver. To this last Tregellas objected.

"I don't see the use of going armed," he said.

"It will make me anxious to think of you riding through the woods with all our money in your pocket, unless you are armed," she said.

"Well then—if I must take one, don't give me that silly thing, but the one on my dressing-table. Take care, for it is loaded."

Edith laid the one Tregellas had called "silly" on the breakfast table. It was a pretty, silver-mounted gimcrack which he had bought when he was young and green. It had cost a good deal of money, and would be more likely when used to hurt its possessor than any one else. He took the other which she brought—holding it away from her as if she were afraid of its going off—glanced at it, and put it in his pocket, declaring that he would as soon be without it. He rode off, bidding her not be anxious, and not expect him till to-morrow morning.

"He never even stopped to kiss me!" said Edith aloud, as she stood listening to the mare's footsteps. But she knew she was unreasonable, and chid herself for thinking about such a trifle when their all was at stake.

Remembering that the drawbars were down, she went a little way into the woods expecting to meet Batheenie on her way back, and intending to tell her to put them up. But, there being no sign of Batheenie when she had got half-way up the hill, she returned, thinking it best to try to put the bars up herself. There was no knowing at what hour that dusky handmaiden might see fit to return to her work; and before long it was possible that the colt, the cow with her calf—not to mention pigs of various sizes—would be on the verandah taking notes of the breakfast paraphernalia.

Everybody who has lived in the country of drawbars knows that they are much easier to take down than to put up. It is a way they have. The inexperienced hand always takes down the wrong one first, and that makes them ten times harder to put up. These drawbars were constructed in a scientific manner, and they were worse than any Chinese puzzle to the inexperienced hand that began by taking down the wrong bar. Edith was an inexperienced hand. She found each succeeding bar heavier than the last, and was forced to sit down and rest before she could put up the topmost one. When she had got the topmost one up and had walked back to the house she felt too tired to eat her breakfast. She went to the kitchen to attend to the fire, as Batheenie was still absent; and then she took her cookery book down from its place on the kitchen dresser, to study the section of supper dishes. For if her husband came home late that night, whether he had his money or not, it was certain that he would be hungry.

By this time the sun was about an hour high. There was all day in which to study the supper *menu*. There

must be something substantial first; something which would not spoil by keeping hot. Then a cold dish, toothsome and delicate; then a sponge cake flavoured with vanilla, and coffee roasted fresh, and cream, as good as it could be made out of Devonshire. She smiled as she pictured to herself her husband's smile when he should return, tired and hungry and chilly from riding through the dank woods, and see the little table set in the cosy corner by a pleasant fire of sassafras and cedarwood.

It was about nine o'clock when Mr. Macfarlane came in and told his wife that he had seen Mr. Ellacombe and Mr. Tregellas galloping towards Harmonia junction. He had shouted to them jocularly, "Sickness or death?" for it was a popular saying among the natives that a horseman who went at a gallop must of necessity be going either for doctor or undertaker. Mr. Ellacombe had shouted back in answer, but he could not tell what he said.

"So there's Mis' Tregellas all alone," Mrs. Macfarlane observed.

"Oh," said he, "she's all right, depend upon it. Tregellas is not the man to leave his wife if she were ailing."

"She may be all right, but I should not like to be left like that myself, with nobody but a trifling yellow girl to depend on, and miles away from everybody."

"N—o," said Mr. Macfarlane, "I dare say you would not like it. You'd be afraid of ghosts. But being left alone is a thing that crowds of women living in this country have to put up with at some time or other, and nothing ever happens."

"I don't know about that," said his wife.

"But what should happen?"

"Well—tramps for instance."

Mr. Macfarlane burst out laughing. "Because you've read in the papers of tramps 'way up in Maryland, you think there must be tramps down here. I thought you had more sense, my dear. No, no. Wait till this country is settled up a bit, and then I guess we shall see tramps, but not till then. Tramps, my dear, are a genus that don't like a long walk between their breakfast and their dinner. They keep to a country where they can strike a house, comfortably, and without getting blown, just in the nick of a mealtime. In thirty years from now you may expect tramps, and shiver and shake to your heart's content in the expectation. You women always will meet trouble half-way, and perhaps you cannot help doing so. But don't go forward thirty years to meet it."

"Well then, it is not tramps. It shall not be tramps. It shall be something else," said Mrs. Macfarlane. "How you do run on," she added, with a toss of her head as she left the room. She returned presently in her hat and riding skirt.

"I was going to have chicken pie for dinner," she said, "but if I trust it to Aunt Delphy, the chicken will be raw and the crust will be burnt. So you will have to put up with a boiled dinner for to-day. I'm going down to Mis' Tregellas."

"Well!—" Mr. Macfarlane ejaculated.

"I don't feel comfortable, knowing her to be quite alone with only that no account yellow creature."

"Well, my dear, if you like to be a kind of female

Quixote it's your own look-out. I shouldn't mind betting a new hat that you will find nothing to justify your putting yourself about. But go, go. You are a good-natured little woman if ever there was one in this world."

"I tell you, Mr. Macfarlane," said his wife with emphasis, "I *like* that woman. She is genuine. And —there's only one woman in this township that adores her husband, besides Mis' Tregellas, that I know of. And that's myself."

"What a reason for being fond of her!"

"Fellow feeling, don't you see. I don't mean that he deserves it. No man deserves to be adored. It's a mistake. It makes them vain. Husbands ought not to think too much of themselves."

"Well, my dear, you can tell Mrs. Tregellas to correct any such tendency in her good man by giving him boiled dinner once in a while.—I suppose you will be back some time this week, because of the baby."

"Perhaps that may fetch me," said his wife, nodding good-bye as she rode off with Jess behind her.

On a rough path, with fences and drawbars to take down and replace, Mrs. Macfarlane's progress was necessarily slow. When she had got about halfway, she began to feel as if she were really a female Quixote, riding out to protect her friend from imaginary dangers, and she thought of turning back. But on reflection, she felt sure that were she at home she should again feel uncomfortable at the idea of her friend's loneliness. "And why," thought she, "should one feel uncomfortable more than need be?" So she jogged on with the black boy behind her, and in about an hour had

reached the drawbars leading into the Tregellases' yard.

Leaving Jess to unsaddle the horse, she walked towards the house, observing as she passed that the kitchen door was open, and that the kitchen was empty. As no smoke ascended from the chimney, the inference to be drawn was that the kitchen fire was out. With a mental comment on the evidence this afforded of the general trashiness of a yellow girl, she went on to the house. On the verandah was the breakfast-table, still laid, and apparently waiting for the master and mistress. She went a step further, and saw that every door was open, and that Edith's room was in disorder, with coats, shoes, and gowns, strewed on the floor, and boxes and drawers open. Calling loudly to her friend, Mrs. Macfarlane ran into the sitting room. There Edith lay on the floor, apparently in a dead faint. To fetch water, and dash it in her face, was the work of an instant.

Presently Edith revived, opened her eyes, and said faintly :—"Is he gone?"

"Do you mean Mr. Tregellas?" said Mrs. Macfarlane.

"It was a man." Edith sighed and looked as if she were going to faint again.

Rummaging in the cupboard, Mrs. Macfarlane at length found a flask of brandy, and succeeded in making Edith swallow some. Presently Edith spoke again.

"He was a horrid looking man in striped clothes. And he had no hat on."

"Striped clothes, and no hat on!" Mrs. Macfarlane repeated, and her face became almost as pale as Edith's. "Are you sure, dear?" Edith nodded. "And

his face was exactly like that of Batheenie's little boy, Dock."

"Then he was black?"

"Oh, so black!—I never saw such a black negro. He had a horrible face."

"A tramp, I dare say," said Mrs. Macfarlane. She felt her teeth beginning to chatter from sheer fright, and swallowed a mouthful of brandy to keep up her courage. For who should have striped clothes, unless it were a convict? And where should a convict come from, but from the gang working on a new line of railway eighty miles to the south?

"Tramps indeed!" she soliloquized, "don't I wish it were only a tramp! If I had but a pistol now, how handy it would be."

There was a gun in the gun-rack over the mantle-piece, far above the reach of such a little woman as Mrs. Macfarlane. She pushed a table close to the mantle-piece, mounted on a chair to step on the table, and so managed to stretch up and reach the gun; not without muttered comments on the innate stupidity of the men creatures, who always imagined everybody was as tall as themselves. Then bidding Edith not be startled, she went a little way from the house door, and fired once. If there were any more convicts lurking in the woods, they would seek some other hiding place, she thought. The gun was heavy and her heart was beating with fright, and when she came back she was obliged to sit down on the step of the verandah to steady herself.

"How long ago was it that you saw this man?" she asked when she returned to Edith. Edith could not

tell; except that she had looked at the sun and calculated it to be an hour high, a minute before she saw him. Batheenie had not returned from the hillside where the workmen were, and she had been on the point of re-entering the house when the man appeared from the other side, and followed her.

"I came in here. I had an idea of snatching up Harry's gun, but I fainted instead. I revived once, and he saw me. He was in my room, and had my husband's shooting coat in his hand. He told me to keep quiet, else he would shoot me; and he pointed Harry's own pistol at me, which he must have taken from the table in the verandah. Then I fainted again. I feel as if I had been lying here a whole day. Where is Batheenie?"

"I have not seen her," said Mrs. Macfarlane. She fetched a pillow for Edith's head, and then went out to call Jess.

Jess was basking in the sun by the kitchen door.

She bade him catch the horse again and go home and tell Master Jemmy (Mr. Macfarlane) to fetch the doctor and bring him down right away.

"And tell Aunt Delphy to kill some chickens for soup, and get a ham boiled, and make some light bread, and send back by you what bread there is in the house, and that cake I made yesterday. Tell her to send everything she can think of, because I am afraid Miss Edith's going to be mighty sick, and I'm bound to stay with her. And tell her to take care of baby."

"Oh, I reckon I kin take keer of him," said Jess. "Is Miss Edith gwine ter die?" he added with his broadest grin.

"H—m. We'll hope not. But she's pretty sick," said Mrs. Macfarlane, knowing that Jess's desire to be the bearer of sad news would effectually prevent all loitering by the way.

By the time the horse was caught Mrs. Macfarlane had written a laconic note to her husband, which she gave to Jess, bidding him seek for Master Jemmy, and never stop till he found him and delivered that note into his hands.

She went back to Edith, who by this time was able to rise and sit on the sofa. She again asked if Batheenie had returned. It would be getting time to see about cooking dinner for the hands. They would be in by twelve o'clock.

"I do not think she is on the place," said Mrs. Macfarlane. "I should not wonder if she had gone for a frolic."

Edith rose and walked across the room. "I shall have to cook the dinner myself," she said. But she would have fallen had not Mrs. Macfarlane run to her and guided her back to the sofa.

"You have had fright enough to knock down any woman, my dear, and you must just submit to lie down and be quiet. And that's all there is about it," said Mrs. Macfarlane, peremptorily.

"But the dinner for the hands," said Edith, with tears in her eyes. Mrs. Macfarlane promptly administered another spoonful of brandy.

"Now then, where do you keep your kitchen apron, and your kitchen cap, and your sleeves, and the matches? Because I am the woman that's going to cook the hands' dinner."

"Oh, my dear!—" Edith found breath to say,

"you must not, really. Harry would be quite shocked."

"Let him be shocked," said Mrs. Macfarlane coolly. "He is not my husband. I hope I may never do anything more shocking. Why, do you think there's nobody but you that's strongminded in this green world?"

To see that little woman running to the wood pile for chips, blowing into life the few lumps of charcoal left among the ashes, adding now a chip, and now a splinter of pine wood, and now a fir cone, smiling delightedly when she had secured a fine steady flame; was a sight far more calculated to make a man fall in love, than the sight of the same little woman, dressed in the latest New York fashion, with a cuirass bodice, a train a yard long, and heels so high that her walking was an imitation of the gait of a turkey hen. Nor would it have cooled a lover's ardour to see how deftly she sifted the meal, and patted the corn-cakes into shape. Light of step and light of touch, she flitted backward and forward in Edith's cap and apron, several sizes too large for her, looking like a beneficent fairy in disguise.

By the time the coffee and corn-bread were ready and the meat fried, the negroes came slouching into the kitchen.

They stared, seeing a white lady in the kitchen getting ready their dinner, instead of the yellow girl. Mrs. Macfarlane glanced swiftly at them, feeling suspicious. How many of them might know of the convict's whereabouts? It was hardly to be supposed that some one amongst them should not know. It was quite likely that he was being harboured down at the Quarters,

and that some of these men had kept watch while he ransacked the house. There were some bad characters down there; men who, if report said true, should be themselves wearing the striped garments.

But she veiled her suspicions, and spoke pleasantly to them.

"And how do you come on, Uncle Isaiah?" she said, addressing the youngest of the men.

The elder ones tittered, and the one she addressed as "uncle" Isaiah, went behind the others and bent double in his merriment.

"He ain't no uncle," said the oldest man. "He's ole Uncle Jim Harris's boy. He ain't hardly grown." Then he turned his head and there was a fresh burst of tittering.

"I made a mistake," said Mrs. Macfarlane pleasantly. "But he will be 'uncle' Isaiah by and by, if he lives long enough, won't he, Uncle Zen."

"Ah, dat's so," said Uncle Xenophon with a wise shake of the head. "You is right dar, mistiss."

She set his portion of corn-bread and bacon before each man, and gave out a liberal allowance of molasses. "Plenty, plenty," they said, when their plates were swimming.

"Just help yourselves," she said, placing the molasses jug and the coffee boiler on the table. Uncle Xenophon said to his mates afterwards, that she was the nicest white lady-woman he had ever come across in his life. That was how real quality always treated their folks.

Mrs. Macfarlane stole away to look at Edith, who was lying very pale and quiet. Then she stole back again and asked if there were any news.

Well, there was not much news. Uncle Pahrick's mule died last night. Uncle Pahrick had given it 'most everything he could think of, but the mule had died, for all that.

"And it takes a heap to kill a mule," said Uncle Scipio.

"It is rough on Uncle Patrick," Mrs. Macfarlane remarked.

Then she asked whether they had heard shots a little while ago. They replied that they had heard a shot, it might be two shots. They allowed it was Mars' Harry shooting squir'ls. Mrs. Macfarlane took heart when they said that.

"Very likely," she said, taking her cue at once. "I didn't see him when I came in."

"What! Is Miss Edith sick?" they asked. For squirrel soup is supposed by negroes to be the invalid's dish *par excellence*.

Mrs. Macfarlane shook her head. "I'm afraid she's mighty sick."

"Well now, I'm sorry; for she's a mighty nice lady," said Uncle Zen, who felt himself quite old enough to express an opinion on white folks. "And whar's Batheenie?"

"Gone on a frolic, I suppose. I didn't find her here," said Mrs. Macfarlane carelessly.

Uncle Zen opined that it was a wrong time for frolicking when the missus was sick: and the rest assented, "Dat's so."

Mrs. Macfarlane asked one to fetch wood and another to fetch water, and when that was done she thanked them heartily for their services, and they slouched away, muttering that she was welcome.

She sat down when they were gone and considered. Should she ask one of them to stay? Or should she wait alone till her husband arrived? Then it occurred to her, Suppose the convict were prowling in the woods where Jess would pass? Suppose he stole the horse and illtreated the boy? For one instant her imagination pictured every kind of mishap. Then she rose and stamped her little foot. "I did not believe I was quite such a fool as all that!" she exclaimed. She went to the spring and dashed the cool water over her face. This braced her up somewhat, and she went back to the kitchen, and made some strong coffee for herself and Edith. She coaxed Edith to drink it, and drank some herself for company. Edith again inquired for Batheenie, and was again told she must be gone on a frolic. It was just the kind of thing a yellow girl would do, Mrs. Macfarlane said, but there was no use in being troubled about it. She bade Edith try to sleep, and closed the shutters and left the room, intending to look about and see if any signs around the house could serve to explain Batheenie's disappearance. She walked up part of the hillside where the hands were chopping. She kept just beyond their sight, and listened for a long time, but there was nothing to be heard except the strokes of the axe. The work, apparently, was being carried on in a perfunctory manner. The master's eye, lacking since the early morning, made so much difference. Yet, that the work was going on at all, argued that the negroes did not know of his absence from home; because, had they known, it was probable that they would have quitted work entirely. Somewhat

reassured, she went down the hill and walked round the kitchen and back yard. No one was in sight, and the only sound was that of the distant chopping. Carrying her scrutiny within doors, Mrs. Macfarlane peeped into Batheenie's cabin, which stood in the rear of the kitchen. The bed was unmade, and the sheets and pillowcase were missing. Some lithographs with which Edith had adorned the walls, were also missing.

Mrs. Macfarlane smiled. She felt as a detective feels when he has made a discovery.

She sauntered round the yard again, and stopped before the wood pile. The logs lay haphazard, as they might have lain when thrown one by one from a waggon. But, against the logs thrown lengthwise, a few short pieces were placed, leaning at such an angle as to form a small hollow. Across this hollow a freshly cut pine branch was thrown. At first sight, this looked accidental; but when Mrs. Macfarlane observed that the wood pile was composed wholly of beech and oak, she began cautiously to take down the short pieces of wood.

She was rewarded by finding the sheets and pillowcase and lithographs, all wrapped up in a cloak of Edith's. There was another bundle made up in a black silk dress. Mrs. Macfarlane carried the whole of the plunder into the house, and unfolded the contents. Batheenie had apparently collected her tithe of the house in the most impartial manner. There were illustrated drawing-room books, an ormolu inkstand, some of Tregellas's boots, part of his shooting suit, dresses belonging to Edith, baby clothes, knives and forks, and a silver-mounted pistol.

While she was looking over these things Mr. Macfarlane

rode up. "Well, well, well," was his greeting as he dismounted.

Mrs. Macfarlane was going to say, "Didn't I tell you something might happen?" but stopped herself and said instead :—"I don't think I have ever been so glad to see you. I have been trembling with fright ever since I came, lest that convict should come back. I fired one shot with Mr. Tregellas's gun to make believe there was a man about the house; but for aught I could tell, that wretch might have been peeping from behind the trees, and seen that it was only poor little me." Then she broke down and cried on his shoulder.

"My little woman! My bonny woman!" said he, soothing her.

"I'm tired too," she sobbed, excusing herself. "I've cooked the hands' dinner, and I've been so anxious about that poor young thing. I'll be all right in—in a moment, Jemmy."

"Take your time, darling," he said. "If you feel like a good cry, why, cry." This made her laugh, and the sight of Jess on horseback with a big basket put her once more into good spirits. The basket was brought into the house, and Jess ordered to the kitchen to build up a big fire and get chickens ready. "For," said Mrs. Macfarlane, quite herself again, "when once the alarm spreads, you see if we don't have a big crowd down here.—Well, all Harmonia may come, now I have plenty for them to eat.—I say, Mr. Macfarlane,—"

"Well, my dear," said the good man.

"You have lost your bet. You send to New York to-morrow for a new hat for me, do you hear?"

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GARLICK RINGS THE BELL.

As soon as Mr. Ellacombe had set out on his anxious errand his wife prepared for a drive to Harmonia. She knew that Mr. Garlick banked at the Jonesville bank, and she thought that if she hurried the pony she might possibly be able to warn him in time. At all events she would not feel satisfied unless she made the attempt. On her way back she would go to Tregellas's place and bring Mrs. Tregellas home to stay till next day, when both their husbands would be home, no matter what befel the bank. Mary promised to get her dairy work done and a room prepared for Mrs. Tregellas while her mother was absent. She was not anxious, as her mother was, about the breaking of the bank.

"I suppose it won't be all the world, even if father does lose the money. He will make it up again," she said, when Mrs. Ellacombe expressed her fear lest her husband should be too late.

"It will not quite ruin us, but it will cripple us sadly," Mrs. Ellacombe replied. "But there!—you don't

know what it is to feel crippled, child—and how should you ?"

Mr. Garlick sat in the room which, according to the exigencies of the moment, did duty as parlour, kitchen, cellar, or scullery. His breakfast-table was laid, and the coffee and the egg scramble were getting cold, while he read with deep interest an article in the *Scientific American*. Hearing the clock strike, he looked up and saw his breakfast, and at the same time he saw Mrs. Ellacombe drive up and stop at his door.

As soon as Mr. Garlick's meals were cooked and placed on the table, it was the practice of his *factotum* Phil to go and pay a visit to the coloured lady who cooked for the people next door. Consequently, Mr. Garlick went to open the door himself. He bade Mrs. Ellacombe enter with more cordiality than usual; for a call from her at such an hour was such a strange thing, that he could only think she came to borrow money. He had already the reputation of being a good-natured man with plenty of means, and had been lending money this summer to various of the Harmonia settlers who had undertaken farming with an amount of capital which made allowance neither for drought nor for any other drawback—not even for the drawback of inexperience. He was sorry to see the distress in Mrs. Ellacombe's face, and asked at once what he could do for her ?

"Oh, Mr. Garlick !" she exclaimed, "have you any money in the Jonesville bank ?"

These words confirmed Mr. Garlick's fears. To think of such steady, substantial people as the Ellacombes being in a hard place ! He answered quickly :—

"Just at present, very little; but enough to accommodate a friend."

"I'd have been here an hour ago if my pony hadn't balked. I did all I knew, but that pony had made up his mind to be trying, and trying he was. There he stuck as if he were turned to stone, and me sitting fretting behind him. I declare I began to think at last that that pony had his share of original sin."

Mr. Garlick was so delighted with this idea that Mrs. Ellacombe was relieved. If he could laugh it was quite clear that he had really but little to lose if the bank broke. She refused to breakfast with him, though he produced his bachelor-kettle and offered to make her a cup of tea immediately. She must go, she said, and fetch Mrs. Tregellas home, and her daughter would wonder what was keeping her so late. She took in his bachelor surroundings at a glance, and, as she bade him good-bye, wished him a good lady to keep him comfortable. Mr. Garlick laughed, and said that he had his own ideas of comfort, and had carried them out successfully for many years.

When he had swallowed the cold coffee and the leathery scramble he turned the cat out of his hat and went to the doctor's house. He was mentioning to Trelease Mrs. Ellacombe's errand when a note was brought to the doctor. Dr. Bontecoe read it and tossed it to Trelease as he went out. It was Mrs. Macfarlane's note to her husband, which he had sent on by one of his farm hands.

Trelease took his hat and a big stick and set off at once. If the convict knew that the master of the house would be away for hours, it was possible he might

still be lurking in the woods. Mr. Garlick, with his hat very much on the back of his head, strode up to the hotel, and seeing the big dinner-bell in its place, began to ring it to the best of his ability.

Now there is art in the ringing of bells, as there is in the blowing of trumpets. And as Mr. Garlick had not studied the rudiments of campanology, the bell in his hands gave out an uncertain sound, as of a bell bewitched; and the head waiter and Boniface came running at the top of their speed, supposing there was a fire somewhere. Mr. Garlick cried out that a convict had been seen at Tregellas's, and put the bell into the waiter's hands, who sent forth a peal which presently brought all Harmonia together. The Colonel came up, and a town meeting was hastily convened in the hotel dining-room.

Mary was still busy in her dairy when the light was obscured by the squat figure of Cleopatra, who folded her arms on the window-sill and looked in.

"The butter is come at last," said Mary. "You can come and clean the churn."

"Oh, Miss Ma'y," Cleopatra began, "dar's a genteman what say, please gi'm some breffus, if you please, ma'am."

"A gentleman wanting breakfast?" said Mary. "Is it any one I—we—know?" For it flashed across her mind that Raine might be out with his gun, and had perhaps determined to brave her mother's cold welcome.

"I dunno," said the negro. "Maybe you's 'quainted. How'd I know?"

"Is it Mr. Raine?" Mary asked.

The girl laughed. "No'm. Hit's a cullud genteman."

Then it was Mary's turn to laugh. "A coloured gentleman! A beggar you mean."

"Pshaw! He ain't no beggar. He's got a mighty good coat on, 'zackly like Mr. Raine's. He jes hongry, an' want sumfin t'eat, I reckon."

Mary had heard of tramps. The comic papers were just then full of the exploits of the American tramp: his raids on lonely farmhouses, his bullying of trembling women folk whose husbands and fathers were in the fields; above all his daintiness with respect to his meals. But the tramps in the comic papers were always white gentlemen. So that when Mary heard it was a "cullud genteman" who desired breakfast, she supposed it to be a negro on his way to seek work on one of the various new lines of railway down south. Food was never refused to such as these.

She went to the pantry and cut a hunch of bread and fat meat such a negro's soul loves, and carried it to the kitchen. The negro was seated on the ground with his back towards her, examining his foot. He did not rise when he saw her, but ducked his head awkwardly, with a muttered salutation.

"Sarvant, mistiss."

Mary thought she had seldom heard a more sulky voice, but she answered pleasantly, and placing the food on the table bade him eat. He took the plate and seated himself on a low bench by the stove, turning his back towards her. He was apparently a very common field hand, not accustomed to eat at a table.

"Got any buttermilk to spar'?" he asked in the same sulky voice, when he had swallowed a few mouthfuls. Mary bade Cleopatra fetch a bowlful, and stood watching

the negro, attracted by the appearance of his coat, which, as the girl had said, was something like a shooting coat of Mr. Raine's. There was a difference, yet it was familiar.

She went a step nearer. The more she looked, the more certain she was that she had seen that coat before. On the corner of the right-hand pocket was a darn: just such a darn as Mrs. Tregellas had made in her husband's shooting coat, while Mary was staying there.

"Where did you get that coat?" she asked, in as indifferent a tone as she could assume.

The negro answered readily. He had bought that coat for a dollar, of a gentleman who kept a store in Jones county.

"It is rather a tight fit; don't you think so?" said Mary, who felt more certain than ever that it was Mr. Tregellas's coat, and that the negro had stolen it.

"Dat's so. Mighty nice coat, but a leetle small." He lifted his arm as he spoke, and at the same moment Cleopatra entered with the bowl of buttermilk. She stopped short and stared as if fascinated.

"Bring the buttermilk here," said Mary. The girl came forward slowly and put the bowl on the table, still keeping her eyes on the man. As he took hold of it he inquired whether the "boss" was at home. Mary replied that he would be home after a while, and returned to the dairy, followed closely by Cleopatra.

"Miss Ma'y," said the girl in a terrified whisper, "you see dat man shirt? Dat an ole convict, sho's you bawn."

Cleopatra's usual colour was a dark burnt sienna, the

next shade to black; that is to say, it was deeper than bronze and quite as highly polished. But now, the skin of her face had become grey and lustreless: that is the negro's way of turning pale. And she was shaking from head to foot as only a negro can shake, from sheer fright.

"How do you know?" Mary whispered. She too, felt an unwonted sensation of nervousness, though she had all her wits about her. But she had heard of convicts doing terrible things. And the men in the field were too far off to hear if they were called.

"See his shirt?" Cleopatra whispered. "I seen de stripes when he lif' up his arm, so, an' de coat come leetle open. Dey all wars striped clothes so de folks may know um. An' he got no hat. Oowhey!"

"Go and call the men in from the field," said Mary. "I will stay here and watch him."

"What use my callin' dem? Dey'll all run an' hide deirself when I tell um dere's an ole convict setting right in de kitchen."

Mary thought for an instant.

"Less we go hide in de woods," said Cleopatra, catching hold of her mistress's dress in her terror.

"No," said Mary, "stay here till I come back." As she spoke she began to fill a tin bucket with buttermilk.

"You ain't gwine back in de kitchen?" said Cleopatra. "Oowhey!"

"Let go my dress," said Mary quietly.

Cleopatra opened her mouth to shriek, but Mary took her by the shoulder and shook her and bade her be silent. The girl was so astonished that she fell down in a heap on the floor and gasped, staring wildly.

With the bucket in her hand, Mary returned to the kitchen. The negro was draining the last drop of buttermilk from the bowl, and eagerly accepted the offer of more. Mary asked whether he was looking for work, and he replied, in a voice which endeavoured to be lachrymose, that he had been mighty sick and was going to his home in North Carolina. He was a big, strongly made fellow, as black as a coal and as shiny as patent leather. "I don't think you look very sick," Mary remarked. "Ah, but I is, do'," was the negro's reply.

"You can stay here as long as you like," said Mary, "and there is more buttermilk if you wish it." As she spoke, she went out, pulled the door after her and locked it. Then she ran to the window, which was on the other side, and of which the shutter was closed of a morning, because Mrs. Ellacombe thought that the sun put the fire out. This shutter had been an afterthought, and was merely a few pieces of plank nailed together, and kept in place when in use by a wooden bar which ran into a staple on each side. Mary examined the bar and found it fast. Then, calling to Cleopatra to follow her, she ran up the path which led to the high road. Cleopatra followed her, but soon dropped behind, exhausted with whooping and shrieking. Mary ran on till she came to the foot of the hill. She stopped for one moment to take breath, and as she stopped she heard a shout. She answered it, waving her handkerchief. Then she sat down under the shade of a cherry tree to wait till the person came nearer: for the sun was getting hot and she was bareheaded.

It was Raine whose shout she had heard. He had

been one of the first to hear Mr. Garlick's alarm, and he had hurried down to warn the Ellacombes. When he saw Mary at the foot of the hill, without hat or parasol, and with her housekeeping apron on, he knew something was wrong. He felt for his revolver, and rushed on, making a bee-line towards the spot where Mary was. He could hardly speak when he reached her. "Have you been frightened?" he said, seizing both her hands.

"I've got a convict locked up in the kitchen. Here is the key," said Mary. "Oh—and I am sure he is wearing Mr. Tregellas's coat, unless he has stolen yours."

Raine looked at her. "By Jove!" was all he could say.

"Let us make haste," said Mary. "He might break the door down and get away."

"Steady," said Raine. "It won't do to be blown when I open the kitchen door. Steady." They went on, and as they went Raine told her what he knew of the convict's movements that morning. When they reached the barnyard gate Mary said, "I know where the cow-hide whip is hanging, and I'll get it and run after you."

"All right," said Raine. "But I have my revolver."

"Now," said Mary, when she had got the whip, "I'll go a little in front, and open the door, because I understand the lock. And then, when it is open, he will see you standing in the doorway. You won't hurt him more than you can help," she added.

Raine laughed and said he did not see what was the good of being tender to such vermin, but to please her he would shoot low. He drew his revolver as he spoke. They were going on at a steady pace, Mary a little

behind, when she gave a cry of dismay, and Raine bidding her stay where she was, ran onwards. What had made her cry out was, that she saw the kitchen door move. She hurried on, but before she had reached the rail fence which enclosed the dwelling-house and its various offices, the kitchen door had been lifted by main force off its hinges, and the negro had cleared the fence and was making for the woods, closely pursued by Raine.

Mary heard a shout and two shots fired. At the end of half an hour Raine came back crestfallen, with his coat torn to pieces by locust thorns and without his hat. He found Mrs. Ellacombe, Mary, and the black girl, huddled together, trembling.

Had he killed the man? they asked.

"No such luck," said Raine. "The fellow was as cunning as a fox. I thought I knew these woods pretty well, but he knows them better."

Mary and her mother exchanged glances. "And father is coming home late at night through the woods!" she whispered. Mrs. Ellacombe wrung her hands.

"Oh, Mr. Raine," she cried. "He's getting old, and he has nothing but his riding whip. He never would go armed."

Raine offered to patrol the woods from nightfall till morning.

Mrs. Ellacombe hesitated. It would be asking too much, she said.

"Too much!—Well, if I am not to do it for your satisfaction, I'll do it for my own," cried Raine. Mrs. Ellacombe murmured that she should never forget his kindness. She looked round for Mary, but Mary had disappeared.

Raine, however, said he must go back to Huish's to get some fresh cartridges. He promised to return before dusk.

"How can I ever thank you for such kindness?" said Mrs. Ellacombe. He looked at her for a minute. "Be kind to me," he said, and went away not waiting for an answer. Mrs. Ellacombe sat down and rocked herself to and fro in the perturbation of her spirit. There was no mistaking his meaning. "Of course he means that I'm to let him come here and court Mary," she said to herself. "And it will never do. I know it will never do."

She said not a word to Mary. And Mary for her part avoided mentioning the name of Raine. There was, it is true, a great deal to talk about besides. It was impossible, now, that Mrs. Ellacombe should leave her daughter, even to go to Mrs. Tregellas's; and besides, Cleopatra was in such a state of collapse from fright and shrieking that she was quite useless, and they had to do the day's work themselves.

But when they sat together in the dusk, after Raine had come and was gone again, Mrs. Ellacombe spoke a word.

"We are much beholden to Mr. Raine, Mary. Much more than I like to be."

Mary assented. "If it were any one else, one would not mind so much. But—I thought the piano was bad enough. And this is worse than the piano. George hasn't answered my letter, by the bye. I wonder if he is angry. I don't care if he is."

"Yes, this is worse than the piano," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "But you must stand firm, child. You must stand firm."

Mary sighed. "I'm going to stand firm, never fear. But oh, if things were different, how much nicer it would be! I do so hate the idea of being ungrateful, or seeming ungrateful. And to show the cold shoulder to a person that has come miles to help one!—There's nobody else in Harmonia that would have done it."

"I don't believe there is," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

CHAPTER VIII.

AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

WITHIN an hour from the ringing of the bell, the news had reached the outermost of the scattered houses in the settlement: not of one escaped convict, but of a dozen.

There was consternation everywhere. The negroes huddled together and told horrible tales of the doings of escaped convicts. Some of these tales were calculated to try even a white woman's equanimity, and every woman who heard them, and who had lived all her life too much afraid of firearms to learn to fire off a gun or a pistol, wished heartily that she had had the pluck to learn. As these women did not know how to defend their houses if attacked, they did the next best thing: they hid away their valuables. Thus Mrs. Lovett put her plated teapot and her cruet-stand under her mattress, and her trinkets, which included hair-bracelets and a filigree set, into the flour-barrel. Mrs. Macgregor bestowed all she could carry in two huge pockets on each side of her, and such articles as were not portable she put into her bedroom chimney,

which was still filled with summer greenery. A negro teamster came by with the additional news that Mr. Tregellas had been seen on his way to the station early in the morning, and on hearing this Mr. Macgregor who had been firing off his gun and re-loading it, declared that somebody ought to go down and take care of Mrs. Tregellas. Mrs. Macgregor said she did not know who that somebody might be: but it would not be herself, neither would it be him. It was his bounden duty to stay and take care of her and the property.

"What's a man for but to protect his family?" she asked.

"But it would be only neighbourly for some one to go," Macgregor persisted. And he looked at the woods in the distance, beyond which was the boundary fence of Tregellas's place. Mrs. Macgregor too, stood for a moment and gazed thoughtfully at the woods.

"I'm just considering," she said. "Is Mrs. Tregellas my neighbour?"

"Why, of course she is!"

"I am not sure of that. In the first place, she is more than eight miles from here by the road."

"Oh, if you go by the eight mile radius!"

"Why, John, one must go by some rule. How is one to manage one's affairs else? Of course I wish to do my duty, when I know where my duty lies. But Mrs. Tregellas and I have never been intimate."

"Then I should say that now was an excellent time to begin."

"John," said Mrs. Macgregor solemnly, "do ye really mean to tell me that it is my duty to leave my house, and my child, and all the cows, and that Jersey

heifer that may come in any day, and will have the garget most likely, and go eight long miles on the worst road that there is in the settlement, to see a woman that is only an acquaintance?"

"I'm not telling you your duty, Margaret; Heaven forbid! It's none of my business."

"I know full well it's not your business, John. But I'd be glad to know what ye're driving at."

"At nothing at all," said Macgregor testily. "I merely said I thought one of us ought to go down, and I think so still. That is all. As far as we know, the poor young thing may be alone and unprotected."

"She has a servant," Mrs. Macgregor began; but her husband was gone. She heard him presently whistling "Bonnie Dundee" in the stable yard, and the sound irritated her. It seemed like a species of defiance quite out of place considering their relative positions.

"It was just that unbecoming way John had," she said to herself. It was just as though he felt himself to be in the right when all was said and done, and took that way to tell her so, knowing full well she could not whistle back.

Mr. Macgregor's conscience could not be satisfied till he had ridden as far as the Haverstocks' place, and there he learnt that help was being sent to Mrs. Tregellas, and he could go home and eat his dinner in such comfort as was possible to him.

At the town meeting held at the hotel Colonel Haverstock had been unanimously voted into the chair. He made arrangements with those present to divide into scouting parties to patrol the woods and visit the outlying houses in the settlement, and report

themselves at a certain time at the post-office, that being the most central spot. And then he went home to tell his family.

He came in with unusual briskness. The incident, with the dash of possible danger in it, came as a relief to the dull monotony of his life. His head was erect and his eye bright, as in the days gone by.

"Now girls," he cried, "where are your firearms? Clean your pistols, and be ready for convicts. Kate, fetch me some boiling water." As he spoke he took down his gun, fired both barrels into the air, and began to clean it.

They all crowded round; even Mrs. Haverstock left her writing-table and her important correspondence with the editor of the *Lion*, and made one of the group that listened as the Colonel told the news.

"You will be going down to Mrs. Tregellas's, I suppose, papa," said Kate.

The Colonel answered that he was going down in the buggy with one of the men to see how things were, and that he had ordered a buggy from the livery-stable for her and her mother. "Kate," he said, "can drive you, my dear, and she can return to be company for Florence in case you think it advisable to stay."

Mrs. Haverstock stared. It was many a year since the Colonel had assumed the command in his own house.

"I have never felt Mrs. Tregellas congenial to myself," she began in measured tones. "Our views, unfortunately, do not coincide."

"Views! This is no time to be talking of views, Cordelia," said the Colonel. "What has common humanity to do with views?"

"Of course, if I really felt it to be my duty," she began.

"There never was a clearer case of duty," said the Colonel. He spoke with authority not to be mistaken. Mrs. Haverstock went to her writing-table and covered up her manuscripts with an air of pious resignation. She had inwardly resolved to hold herself aloof from Edith, because Edith's whole scheme of living was diametrically opposed to her own: and was in some sort a reproach to her. And now she was required by her husband to put herself forward and offer aid and comfort to this very woman!

Kate ran delighted to her room to get ready, declaring that she would feel it a perfect godsend if a convict would come and frighten them. Anything was better than nothing, if they could but be stirred up in this dull hole. Mrs. Bontecoe said she would like to go herself, but she supposed some one must stay at home, else the negroes would all become demoralised.

"Why," said Kate, "I thought you could not bear Mrs. Tregellas."

"I like her well enough when she does not parade her devotion to that husband of hers. As if he were not just like any other man!"

"And a great deal more so," laughed Kate. "Please have something for me to eat when I come back. I don't know when it will be, but I dare say I shall be quite famished. I shall take my pistol in case of accidents."

Mrs. Bontecoe proposed sending one of the hands to meet her, but Kate declined, saying she would feel safer alone than with a negro accompanying her. Mrs. Haverstock put her nightcap and a bundle of tracts

into her handbag, and said she was ready. It was the Colonel who thought of the commissariat and put a basket of eatables into the buggy.

Trelease walked across the hills to his friend's place, and questioned the negroes. They expressed fear—too much fear—he thought, of the convict. He went to the Quarters at Mrs. Macfarlane's desire, to inquire about Batheenie, but could neither see nor hear anything of her. When he returned to tell Mrs. Macfarlane the result of his inquiries it was getting dusk, and he learnt from the doctor that Colonel and Mrs. Haverstock were both there, and that Kate had driven herself home alone. The Colonel said it was quite certain the convict would be many miles away by this time.

"Alone!" said Trelease.

"Oh, Kate is a true soldier's daughter," said Dr. Bontecoe. "She is a very good marksman—or she used to be. Not that there is the slightest danger."

"But—the idea of a young lady going alone in this wild country is so—so—incongruous," Trelease said.

"Of course, if an escort had been possible, she would have had one," said Dr. Bontecoe. "But there is my wife alone, except for the negro servants, and no doubt she is in hysterics by this time from sheer nervousness. The Colonel has been to and fro all day, and is done up. And Mrs. Macfarlane has begged Mrs. Haverstock to stay. I thought the good woman would have run when she saw my face at the front door." He broke into a laugh. "Oh, depend upon it, Kate will be all right."

"I might catch up with her," said Trelease.

"Then you will have to make haste," said the doctor.

By taking a certain turn between two hills, Trelease

thought he should overtake Kate before she could reach the loneliest part of the road. He walked fast and had got to within a few yards of the road, when he heard the wheels of a conveyance and the whistling of its driver. Listening for a moment, he became aware that the tune whistled was Mendelssohn's "Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast:" *ergo*, the driver was possibly American, probably English; certainly not a negro. A minute more and the conveyance came in sight, and he could make out a female figure in it. He jumped into the road and went to meet Kate—for it could be no other. But that Kate Haverstock should whistle! "Oh what a falling off was there!"

"If you touch that horse, I'll fire!" said Kate's voice.

"Friend!" cried Trelease, stopping short as he heard the click of a pistol.

Kate burst out laughing. "Is it you, Mr. Trelease? I thought my last hour had come."

"Yours?" cried he. "Why, you would have blown my head off in another second."

"Did you hear me whistling?"

"Yes, and then I was sure it could not be a negro, because so few negroes can whistle. And they would not be whistling Mendelssohn."

"Did you think it was a man?"

"I did at first. I—that is—"

"Very unlady-like you thought me, of course. To tell the truth I was in the most awful fright you can imagine, and I was whistling to keep my courage up. Because I thought that if that wretched convict was lurking anywhere in the woods, he would think the

whistler was a man, and he would lie low till I had passed by."

"I did not feel comfortable when I heard you were driving home alone," said Trelease. "I rushed on by a short cut, hoping to overtake you."

"I was safe enough. My father would not have let me go else. The convict would not be such a fool as to stay here, you know."

"Probably. Yet you confess to having felt some fear just now."

"So I did. And very ridiculous too! I thought I had no nerves. I have been following my sister's bad example; staying indoors too much, and drinking too much tea. I must alter all that.—I am glad I didn't shoot you."

Trelease laughed. "I am glad you did not, for your own sake. As for myself," he added sentimentally, "I do not know that it would have been a great misfortune. I feel sometimes little better than a cumberer of the ground."

Trelease had been walking by the side of the buggy, and Kate had slackened her pace to suit his. She pulled up and said abruptly, "Had you not better get in?"

Trelease required no second invitation. He jumped in, but Kate kept the reins and they proceeded at a better pace, being now on a level road.

"Do you go in for fasting?" Kate inquired presently.

Trelease replied that he did not; though fasting no doubt had its uses.

"Then you believe in taking meals 'reglar'?"

"Decidedly," said Trelease.

"Then—did your cook spoil to-day's dinner?—if I may

ask." Trelease laughed and explained that he had missed that day's dinner.

"That accounts for it," said Kate. "When you said you felt like a cumberer of the ground, I was sure that you wanted your dinner, or else that you had a touch of liver. Papa always bewails his sins of omission when he has a touch of liver.—Mamma makes a difference. She groans over the sins of other people."

"We have each of us enough sins to keep us groaning," said Trelease.

Kate gave the horse an unnecessary cut with the whip. "Don't talk like that," she cried. "I suppose you say that because you are a clergyman and you think it is proper. Of course everybody sins occasionally, but I assure you for my part I would rather live in a world full of sinners than in one full of prigs."

"In a certain sense, so would I," said Trelease, who felt a little taken aback.

By this time they had reached the Colonel's plantation. Kate bade Trelease go into the house. She would follow as soon as she had seen the horse fed. "I always give the horses their corn when my father is away," she explained, "else the nigger would steal it for his hogs." But before giving out the corn she ran to the kitchen to inquire what there was for supper, and bade the servant beat up a cheese omelet with a touch of cayenne. "He can't help it, poor fellow, if he is a curate," she said to herself, "and it was very good-natured of him to come and meet me." Long before Trelease had finished relating to Mrs. Bontecoe his own small share in the day's doings, they were called to supper,

and found Kate presiding at a table laden with creature comforts, liquid and solid. Though Trelease had sometimes contemplated from afar the beauties of the ascetic life, he was perfectly aware of the difference between a plain bachelor's table and a table set out by a lady. It was no doubt a small matter, but it was pleasanter to see a tablecloth set straight, and the napkins properly folded, and glass and silver and steel shining brightly.

"This is luxury indeed!" said Trelease unfolding his napkin. "I haven't seen a dinner napkin for weeks."

The sisters laughed: and Kate asked whether he had forsworn their use for the sake of mortifying the flesh.

"By no means," said Trelease. "But we found that, as fast as we bought them, they mysteriously disappeared. And one day I saw the cook with one on her head. I suppose it was just the convenient size for a turban, such as those middle-aged women wear. So I thought if that was the way they all went, it was useless to buy any more; and Bontecoe agreed with me. So now we two poor bachelors do without." Trelease, being entreated by the sisters to stay and protect them, was inducted into a room with a view of the stables, and armed with the Colonel's sword, a double-barrelled gun, and a "six-shooter" belonging to Kate, with general directions to shoot any negro seen approaching the stables between midnight and daybreak. He took a good look at his room, and he was more than ever struck with the difference between a bachelor's household, and a household presided over by a lady. In the first place, the bed was level, and he could never get his bed made level. In the second place, it was tucked in at the foot, and he never could get Aunt Peggy to tuck his in at the foot.

Thirdly, there was not a speck of dust anywhere. Aunt Peggy had two theories to account for the perennial layer of dust in Dr. Bontecoe's establishment. It came from the floors: and if the floors were washed in consequence of Dr. Bontecoe's violent objurgations, then it came from the walls, which were new, and required seasoning.

"What a bed!" Trelease exclaimed, as he tried it first one side and then the other. "I don't believe a negro made this bed; I believe that girl made it. And what an omelet that was!—I shouldn't wonder if that girl made it too. But where did she pick up whistling?" With this conundrum unsolved, he went to sleep and slept till sunrise.

CHAPTER IX.

AUNT PHŒBE.

EARLY the next morning Mrs. Macfarlane, who was dozing in a rocking-chair on the verandah, awoke with a start and a shiver, and saw a group of neatly dressed negro women standing in front of her.

"Well! What do you all want here, so soon in the morning?" she inquired in a subdued voice.

Aunt Phœbe limped forward and acted as spokeswoman. "Morn', Miss Parthenia. We's come to see Miss Edith."

"Come to see Miss Edith! Are you all crazy?"

"No, ma'am. We hearn she was dead, so we come to see her."

"Who told you she was dead?" Mrs. Macfarlane demanded.

"Batheenie, she say she dead."

"That was the last story Batheenie told. What else?"

"No, ma'am," said another negress coming forward. "She didn't say she done dead. She say she 'llowed she most dead when she put out. She 'llow she dead by now, sho'ly."

"An' we all 'llowed she was dead when we saw de do' stan' wide open," added another.

Mrs. Macfarlane sat up straight and drew her shawl round her. "Of all the mean, low down trash I ever heard of," she said with great deliberation, "I think Batheenie is about the worst. Mrs. Tregellas is no more dead than I am, but it is no thanks to Batheenie. No, indeed!"

A murmur ran through the group. "Laws now! I do admire! Ain't she now?" in tones varying between wonder and disappointment. To have got up so early in the morning, and walked so many miles dressed in their Sunday best, in the hope of seeing a fair young corpse, and to be defrauded of the object of their labour after all, was a circumstance not be to made light of.

A sulky, dumb anger was visible in those stolid faces and unwinking eyes.

"So," said Mrs. Macfarlane, looking sternly from one to the other, "you all put on your Sunday clothes to come and see a dead woman. It's a pity you haven't a little more sense."

"Laws, Mis' Parthenia," said Aunt Phœbe, "what mek you so mad? You know 'tis custom—ary to go an' see dead folks. An' there's mighty little news, an' de 'tracted meetings ain't begun yit."

All at once the silence was broken by the cry of a young infant. The negro women looked at one another and burst into uncontrolled peals of delighted laughter.

"My Lawd! To think Mis' Tregellas done got her baby, an' Mis' Parthenia foolin' us all dis time! Well, sah!"

"Ain't you 'shamed, making all this fuss!" said Mrs. Macfarlane, lifting her hand in warning.

"Well, I de—clar!" said Aunt Phœbe, with a reproachful look at the youngest and noisiest of the women. "Won't you quit it, Mar' Susan?—Blessed land!"

"Well, I want to know what you are all standing there for?" said Mrs. Macfarlane, when the women's merriment was subdued.

"We—ll," one of them drawled out in a sanctimonious voice, "we didn't know but what we might be of some 'sistance."

"Assistance!" Mrs. Macfarlane repeated. "Oh yes, to be sure. If you want to be of assistance, go and fix up that kitchen. And you—go and fix me up some nice breakfast rolls. The Colonel and the doctor are taking a nap, but they'll wake after a while, and be wanting breakfast. By the by, do you know any girl who wants to hire? Because if so, she had better come right away."

There were murmurs of dissent. They didn't know whether Batheenie had fixed to come back. They did not wish to interfere with Batheenie.

"Make yourselves easy," said Mrs. Macfarlane. "Mrs. Tregellas will send to New York for a cook, or import one, before she takes Batheenie in again. Batheenie may think herself very lucky if Mr. Tregellas doesn't put her into the penitentiary. I tell you, those English like folks to behave squarely. They have not the least use for trifling people."

"I despise trifling folks myself," Aunt Phœbe observed. "I allays act f'ar an' squar' by folks, an' de folks what raise me allays act f'ar an' squar' by me."

"Ah yes," Mrs. Macfarlane said, gliding into a

friendly tone. "You are an old-time servant, Aunt Phœbe. You have had experience."

Aunt Phœbe drew herself up. "Dat I is, mistiss. Me an' my ole man,—Lordy! my folks thinks a heap o' we all, I tell you. Dar was Miss Sue. She's my chile, you know. I nussed her. You's acquainted with my Miss Sue, ain't you?" Mrs. Macfarlane nodded, knowing that to confess ignorance would be to forfeit all claim to Aunt Phœbe's respect.

"She b'long in one of de fust fam'lies," said Aunt Phœbe, with emphasis. "She took an' married wid a North Ca'lina man,—he was a rank stranger to me. An' he car'd her 'way, way down yondah, oowhey! I thought she done forgot her ole Phœbe, but she hadn't, no, sah! Last Trismus she sent me a five dollah bill in a lettah, an' she say 'twas de fust five dollah bill she had to spar' sence de wah. An' I got dat lettah now."

"You are the woman I want," said Mrs. Macfarlane rising. "You are the woman Mis' Edith wants, right now. She has been used to having old-time servants about her, like your Miss Sue was. She ain't been used to have trash like Batheenie, that would go off and leave a lady when she was in a hard place. Now come right in with me." Aunt Phœbe took off her shoes and followed Mrs. Macfarlane into the house. In a corner of the sitting-room on a heap of rugs lay Edith's baby asleep.

Aunt Phœbe looked at it with pursed-up lips. "'Tis a poor little maggot," she whispered. "It ain't a circumstance to my Miss Sue."

There ensued some confidential talk between Mrs. Macfarlane and the old negro woman, which left each

with an increase of friendly feeling to the other. Although nothing had ever been actually charged against Aunt Phœbe or her husband, yet the fact of their belonging to the black colony at the Quarters was felt to militate against their respectability. Perhaps not even the most red-hot old-time abolitionist would have ventured to argue that there was more human nature in a negro than in a pale-face. But certain it is that there is a great deal; or if it is not real human nature, it is a wonderfully good imitation.

Which of us pale-faces—be our minds never so lofty—is not flattered by even a slight recognition of superior merit in us as compared with our friends and neighbours? Aunt Phœbe felt as much flattered as if she had been a "white lady" by Mrs. Macfarlane's compliments and confidences. As she afterwards expressed herself to her old man, she was "tickled" to see that Mis' Parthenia knew she had been well raised and had belonged to quality folks. She undoubtedly thought more highly of Mis' Parthenia for her perspicacity.

She had hitherto had some difficulty in "placing" Mis' Parthenia, and had spoken of her as merely "Mis' Macfarlane," Mis' (*i.e.* mistress) with the family name instead of the Christian name being the negro's style of address for white married women who did not belong to any "fam'ly" of consequence and had never possessed slaves of their own. Ladies,—quality folks—were smart, but not too smart. Her Miss Sue was smart; but no smarter than a lady ought to be; that is to say, if you laced up her shoes wrong, you were mighty apt to feel it on your ear. But Mis' Parthenia was too smart. She could dress herself from head to foot; Aunt Delphy had

testified to that fact. And she had taught her little boy to dress himself, just as if he were a coloured boy. Aunt Delphy did not say anything against Mis' Parthenia. But she would have thought a heap more of her—as would Aunt Phœbe—if Mis' Parthenia had sat in her rocking chair all the morning, and if she had allowed herself to be dressed, even to her shoes and stockings, by Aunt Delphy, instead of getting up so bright and early and being always around looking after everything. It had been reported at the Quarters, that Mis' Edith was one of the same sort. Aunt Phœbe would have felt better pleased had she supposed that Mis' Edith was of the same quality as her Miss Sue: the quality that can neither clothe its own body nor wash its own face nor brush its own hair, but must be tended and groomed as a queen-bee is by the workers. However, being here, Aunt Phœbe felt it due to herself in her own quality of old-time servant, to stay and help a white lady who was in such a very hard place. Not the less, perhaps, that there had been a whisper from Mrs. Macfarlane of good wages,—not old clothes or dried apples, but good greenbacks—to be paid promptly at the expiration of each month.

"Well, anyhow, you won't be the woman to run off and leave her as Batheenie did," said Mrs. Macfarlane.

"Dat nigger too mean an' low lifed for my use, anyway," said Aunt Phœbe.

Yet Aunt Phœbe had her misgivings. This baby had no cradle. Her Miss Sue had had a cradle: all Miss Sue's children had had a cradle. It was true that this baby had appeared before his time, and there might

have been every intention of giving him his cubicular rights. Aunt Phœbe suspended judgment till the subject could be discussed with the proper authorities.

A great deal might have been learnt respecting the probable whereabouts of the convict, had any one of the Englishmen who passed in and out of the sitting-room in the early morning known how to read the thoughts of the old ex-slave, as she crouched by the pile of rugs on which the infant lay. Her eyes were fixed on its tiny face, and her jaws worked with that slow, sideways motion, which is supposed to belong only to the cud-chewing animals. With a piece of sassafras root to chew, Aunt Phœbe might be trusted to remain at her post for hours.

They knew as much as this: that the convict had made off with Harry's shooting coat, and that a bundle containing the rest of the suit among other plunder had been hidden in the wood pile, ready to carry away. Aunt Phœbe could have told them further, that Batheenie, after bringing her two children to Uncle Patrick's house quite early in the day, had disappeared, but had returned later without even as much as a hand-basket; and that shortly after her arrival there had been a loud discussion followed by cries and blows. It was supposed by Aunt Phœbe, whose house was quite near Uncle Patrick's but on higher ground, that Batheenie was being punished for coming home empty-handed. Further, Uncle Patrick had been seen tearing up a striped garment, and setting fire to it in his yard. And Aunt Sophy his wife had been seen to catch and kill a chicken (frying size). Now nobody thought of killing a chicken on a week-day unless they had

company. Furthermore, Uncle Patrick had been seen coming down the hill behind his house long after nightfall, accompanied by Batheenie, who had kept within doors all day. Aunt Phœbe's own conclusion was that Batheenie's husband was the man the gentlemen were all looking for: and that he had got a garment of Uncle Patrick in exchange for the garment she had seen destroyed. It was well known that Batheenie's husband was in the penitentiary in consequence of a mistake respecting another coloured gentleman's cow.

Batheenie always stood out that it was a mistake; that he was innocent: though she could not deny that he had robbed her of her ear-rings and had given them to another girl, not long before his trial in the matter of the misappropriated cow. Well, he was gone, anyway, and, if he did take Mars' Harry's coat, Mars' Harry had plenty more. Of course it was a pity that Mis' Edith had been frightened at a wrong time; but what was the darkey to do? He was obliged to get him a suit, somehow, so he would not be known by the folks about, and the guards of the convict gang to which he belonged. Aunt Phœbe knew where this husband of Batheenie's came from. It was a place called Bellona in North Carolina. He was doubtless on his way there now, as he had been unable to stay at Uncle Patrick's. But Aunt Phœbe told not a word of this. The white people,—Mrs. Macfarlane and Mrs. Haverstock, and the Colonel and the doctor and Mr. Macfarlane—they came and went, and drank coffee, and talked of the parties that had been sent this way and that—but took no heed of the old creature who crouched and chewed her sassafras stick in the corner, with no more

expression in her face than a cow. Aunt Phœbe heard all the talk, the planning and the conjecture, and gave no sign. Had she dared, she would have enjoyed saying something which might disoblige Uncle Patrick. But there was no knowing what serious form Uncle Patrick's resentment might take, supposing the sheriff and his *posse* came to search his cabin and he should discover through whose information the search warrant had been procured. She had heard Patrick boast that he could "trick" the finest running spring, so that the drinker of the water should swell up and die. Aunt Sophy, too, was said to know a trick which would make a person's teeth fall out. When Batheenie's last baby was dropped into the pig-pen by mistake, what happened to the sheriff who came to arrest her? That sheriff died within the year, and before he died every tooth he had dropped out of his jaws. Aunt Sophy always said she knew why he died, and why his teeth dropped out; and it was a generally understood thing down at the Quarters that she and Uncle Patrick were not people to be interfered with. Aunt Phœbe knew a good deal about herbs; there was burdock which "helped mightily" when folks had a stitch in the side, and horehound for coughs, and catnip for colic, besides snakeroot and sarsaparilla and pennyroyal; and oak-bark and slippery elm and sassafras for aches and sprains and bruises: but she knew of nothing that would make people die unless it might be nightshade or poison-oak. But that in her mind would be plain poisoning, not "tricking." There was a vast difference between the two. There was one trick she knew of; not much of a trick, to be sure, for she had tried it twice, and the woman on whom she had

tried it had not had a day's illness in consequence. Still it was a trick, and she would try it on Batheenie at the dark of the moon if Batheenie should appear to be disposed to quarrel with her for taking her place.

Even though she should not care to keep the place, it would not do for her to be worsted if it came to a quarrel with Batheenie. Should that be so, how would she retain the respect of the people of the Quarters? These were some of the considerations which filled her sluggish mind as she kept her watch. Meanwhile the gentlemen departed one by one, and the women who had given a helping hand to Mrs. Macfarlane came in with their shoes in their hands to have a look at the baby, and Mrs. Haverstock in a big night-cap, which stood up like a helmet and nodded every time she spoke, came in and ate a hasty breakfast and departed; and lastly Mrs. Macfarlane came and threw herself on the sofa, vowing that her head was splitting and that she was used up. She had hardly begun to doze when she jumped up again and ran out. She had heard a horse's trot and she thought it was Tregellas coming home.

It was he. He rode along light-hearted, with his money in his pocket. He and old Ellacombe had been just in time. A day later and they would have seen the announcement that the bank had suspended payment. He knew what his wife's anxiety must be, and he called out cheerily, "Edith! ho, Edith." Then he saw Mrs. Macfarlane and began to fear that something was wrong. She held up her hand as he approached.

"She must not be disturbed. She has been dreadfully nervous about you," she said.

"She will be all right now. I have good news for her," said Tregellas.

"But she is asleep. You can see the baby."

"Oh!—Hang the baby!—" cried Tregellas as he rushed to the house.

Mrs. Macfarlane followed slowly. "Hang the baby, indeed!" she soliloquised. "If ever there was an ungrateful creature. 'tis a man."

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH SMUT IS INTRODUCED.

ONLY a country editor could rightly appreciate the feelings with which the news of the convict's escape was received at the respective offices of the *Snooksville Advance* and the *Jonesville Mugwump*. It was the middle of the silly season—a season which in some places and with some newspapers extends over a considerable portion of the year. The days for mad-dog paragraphs were gone by, while it was too soon to begin the mammoth pumpkin series. That useful assistant-editor, the scissors, had been hard-worked of late, and the volumes bristled with "exchanges." Notwithstanding which, the *Snooksville Advance* had been reduced to printing the same poem twice in one week; and the editor of the *Jonesville Mugwump* had impounded his wife's cookery-book, and reproduced, without acknowledgment, a receipt for a dish called in Jonesville French, cheese *fondé*, which, being interpreted, turned out to be Welsh rabbit.

When the news of the convict's escape reached Jonesville, a reporter was sent from the office of the

Mugwump to interview the most prominent citizens of Harmonia. He went no farther than Major Forepaw's office, but the news he gathered was sufficient, when properly expanded, to fill four columns. The *Snooksville Advance*, whose modest circulation did not permit of its employing a reporter, was, however, not a whit behindhand. Its columns were as well filled and its paragraphs a great deal more startling. The immediate consequence of these sensational stories was a great run on the local ironmongers for window-fastenings and door-bolts. After a little while, when no more convicts appeared, and the scare had subsided, people began to leave their windows open at night, and to neglect to bolt their doors, as in the halcyon days of Harmonia's infancy, when convicts were as unexpected as was the serpent when met by Eve in the garden of Eden. But there was always the comfort of knowing that there the bolts and locks were, if any woman should be seized with a fit of nervousness towards nightfall; and Mrs. Lovett and Mrs. Macgregor agreed that a house was more civilised with them than without them. The climax to the series of sensational newspaper paragraphs came when, about a fortnight later, the story was told of the ultimate capture of the convict by the guard of the gang to which he belonged. The story was short, and may be epitomised thus. The guard, instead of joining in the amateur search that was carried on for twenty miles round Harmonia, borrowed a horse, looked to the loading of his pistols, and went at a quiet jog-trot from the place in Georgia where the gang was working, into the pine-barrens district of South Carolina. On the sixth day of his ride he reached an old dilapidated hut,

where the convict's mother lived. Putting aside the old crone, who assured him volubly that she had not seen her son for years, the officer entered and found the negro in bed covered up with the bedclothes. Calling him by his name, he bade him get up and follow him. The negro obeyed, and was returned to the prison which he had left with the rest of the gang hired out to the railway authorities, exactly three weeks after his escape. This story being true and unembellished was treated as fiction; whereas the other stories which told how the convict had robbed stores and killed storekeepers all over Jones county, were received as gospel.

Riding together one afternoon as was their custom, Mr. Denning and Mr. Garlick saw in front of them at a little distance two people walking towards Harmonia, whose appearance was so much out of the common as to attract their attention. They were a man and woman, and they walked slowly, as if they had come a long way. They were both of them deep-chested and broad-shouldered, a little bent, but from their firm steady gait, it would seem to be more from occupation than from age. The man was ruddy and weather-beaten, with curly hair and beard, both streaked with grey. He was dressed in a knitted blue guernsey and sailor-cut nether garments, with an old oilcloth hat on his head. He carried a bag slung across his shoulder, and a stout ashen staff in his hand. The woman was dressed in rusty black, her skirts tucked through the pocket-holes, a plaid shawl pinned to her shoulders, and a Leghorn bonnet of antiquated shape tied with a black bow under her chin. Underneath the bonnet was a cap of quilled net, quakerish in fashion; and this cap framed

a countenance whose sweetness of expression was such as to redeem a harsh set of features from the possible reproach of ugliness. Her hair was iron-grey—the most trying tint to even a well-featured face. A pair of mild blue eyes looked out from the blackest, bushiest of eyebrows, and the square ample forehead was marked by many a line of care and perplexity, but not one of ill-temper. The mouth was too wide and its upper lip too long, but the smile on it was a perpetual protest against the lines and wrinkles and crowsfeet that marked the face. In one hand she carried a big umbrella; on her arm was a covered basket, which appeared to contain something of weight.

Mr. Denning passed them with a friendly gesture, as was his way towards newcomers to Harmonia, and remarked to Mr. Garlick that here was an entirely new type of immigrant. They were riding on slowly when the man approached, and lifting his hat, requested to be directed to Mr. Tregellas's house.

Mr. Denning's face beamed with smiles as he gave the sought-for direction. "And," said he, "am I wrong in conjecturing that you are Mr. Rosevear, and that this good woman is Mrs. Rosevear? Because, if so, I can tell you that you are expected."

"That's me, sir, and that's my missus," said Thomas, for it was he. "Thank you kindly, sir."

Mr. Denning waved his hand. "No thanks. Glad to have met you." And he put his horse to a trot and rejoined Mr. Garlick, who had ridden on slowly.

Thomas went back to Eliza, who was standing at the roadside.

"We'm all right," said he. "What b'ee looking 'mazed about?"

"I am 'mazed," returned Eliza, with emphasis. "You might knock me down with a feather. Why, that's Mr. Denning."

"If you knaw'd un, why didn't 'ee spake to un?"

Eliza laughed. "I've know'd a many folks that didn't know me. I used to see him when I was in my first place. I've opened the door to un many a time. He used often to come over to see my master. He was vicar of the next parish to ours. That's more than twenty year agone."

"Looks careless like in his dress for a passon," Thomas remarked.

"Ah, he was allays like that. They used to tell up, how he was so taken up with his books he wouldn't give hisself time to eat his victuals hardly. Ah well, poor man!"

"What's a passon got to do here?" said Thomas.

"What he's got to do here is more'n I could say. Well, well!—I wonder if his wife is with un. She was a fly-away one, sure 'nough," said Eliza shaking her head. "La! he can't be rector here, for sure."

By this time they had turned out of the high road and were walking down what had come to be known as "Tregellas's lane." There were some flat-topped lichen-stained boulders on the roadside, and here Eliza proposed sitting down to rest. "I didn't mind the basket a bit till just now, and now it seemeth to get heavier at every step." So she sat down and rested, and Thomas lit his pipe.

Trelease coming by, saw them and stopped short.

"If I am not greatly mistaken," said he smiling, as he touched his hat, "you are Mr. and Mrs. Rosevear?"

"That's we, sir," said Thomas, touching his hat in return, while Eliza curtsied.

"Ah, I felt sure of it. Let us shake hands. I'm a Cornishman too. My name is Trelease. Mrs. Rosevear, the last time I saw you, you told me I should go to Botany Bay if I did not mind what I was about."

"La, sir," said Eliza. "You must ha' been leading Master Harry into mischief, if I said such a thing as that. But I don't *mind* it."

"He was leading me into mischief," said Trelease. "I was stealing apples out of Admiral Tregellas's garden; but it was he put me up to it, and gave me a leg over the wall."

"I'll go on with you," he said, when Eliza rose. "I suppose you know you are expected."

"Why, so the other gentleman said," Thomas rejoined.

"I will carry your basket, Mrs. Rosevear," said Trelease, taking it up. "Why, what have we here?" For there was a movement inside the basket.

They both laughed. "'Tis 'Liza's cat. She would bring un," said Thomas. "I told her folk would think she was 'mazed."

Trelease declared he didn't think so, and advised Eliza to put up her cat for exhibition. "On view, a cat from the Old Country. Admission, ten cents."

"Well, sir, he's the wonderfullest cat I ever see'd," said Thomas. "He sits up and begs like a dog, and he purtends to be dead when I fires off an old pistol, and he can jump up and lift the door latch when he wants to

let hisself out. He's half Maltee, and black as my hat, all to what I call his shirt-front, and he's fit for any lady's parlour. I told 'Liza she'd better give un to the Queen if she wanted a good home for un; but she said she reckoned the Queen had got as many cats as she wanted; and he's only half Maltee."

"I didn't mean for to bring him," Eliza added, "but just as I was getting into the cart when we was coming away, I says, 'Good-bye, Smut;' and if you'll believe me sir, he sat up and begged. Well, my man wouldn't hear of my taking him, and to be sure, I'd left him in a good home, like, with my sister's children. So we went along, and I was a-sobbing and sighing like, when it come to the last, and by'mby I turned my head, and there was Smut a-sitting up in the middle of the road, and a-beggin' like any Christian. And he'd run a bit till he got up to the cart, and then he'd sit up and beg, and turn his head fust one side and then the other, and mew so pitiful it went to my heart. So I told my man I couldn't stand that, and I just called him and up he come, and cuddled in to me. And he travelled right up to Liverpool in this here basket, along with my Bible and my best cap."

"'Twas all for the best," said Thomas. "He was the greatest comfort 'Liza had on board, except her Bible and her *Pilgrim's Progress*."

The path was rough, and Eliza who was tired and footsore, begged them to go on a bit and never mind her. But this they would not do. Trelease gave her his arm, and went slowly. And by and by they passed a thicket of blackberries, and Eliza said the sight of it heartened her up, because it looked like home. But

when they had reached the spot from which the house could be seen, the loveliness of the view overcame even Eliza's sense of fatigue. They stood still and looked, and Thomas, who had the *Pilgrim's Progress* in his mind, because of having read it aloud day after day to his fellow-passengers in the steamer, said, "Surely the land of Beulah must be something like that." There was a grape-vine which had twisted its branches so as to form a thicket, and a trumpet-creeper which had trailed itself for many yards and then had climbed a tree sixty feet high, where it hung in twisted ropes with scarlet bunches waving at the ends. And there was a clear space between the trees, which in England would have had a fairy ring in it, but here it was a patch of crimson castilleia, which looked like a bed of lilies. They were silent for a little while: so silent that the redbirds flew out of the thicket, and dipped their bills into the shallow pool which at this time was all that was left of the brook.

"Well," said Eliza, "it looks as if we might come to sitting under our own vine and fig-tree, all in good time. This place is for all the world like a nobleman's park, only prettier. Why, that vine stem there is as thick as my wrist. Whoever planted it, I wonder?"

"The Lord planted it," said Trelease. And they were again silent for a space, wondering at the beauty of it.

"Well," said Thomas, "if we'd picked the world over, we couldn't ha' come to a purtier country. And everybody so friendly like."

But presently they reached the fence which enclosed the house and its appurtenances, and Trelease gave a loud halloo which brought his friend to the door. There

was a prodigious hand-shaking, and then Harry seized his old nurse by the shoulders and hugged her. Trelease walked a little apart, smiling, yet with a feeling of sadness in his heart at the thought that he was so alone in the world. He had not even an old servant to be fond of him. He asked himself, was he to be a mere waif all his life, or should he take his resolution once for all and come to an anchor here. And if he did, what then? For an instant he wished he had remained in his curacy. There at least, he was doing something, even if it was not good for much. But before he had got any further in his gloomy reflections, the first exuberance of the welcome was over, and Tregellas calling to him, bade him enter the house.

"Well, well," said Thomas, when his inner man had been refreshed, and he was seated opposite Tregellas in a comfortable armchair with his pipe lighted, "this do seem like coming home instead o' coming abroad. I fairly thought 'Liza would ha' gone 'mazed when they told us the young admiral was come, and she not there to bid him welcome, like. Her tucks up her skirts, and she says, says she, 'I don't mind if it is seven mile, and seven mile to the top o' that. I can't sit quiet here, and that blessed dear a-wanting me.' So off she goes, and tows me in her wake."

While Thomas was making eager inquiries as to the price of land and the prospect of employment for a man who could put his hand to almost anything, on the other side of the wall Edith was telling her troubles to Eliza's sympathetic ear.

"Whenever I fall asleep, I see the horrible black face of that convict, and then I wake in a fright. But now

you are here perhaps I shall get over it. And you will see that Harry is comfortable and has proper food to eat, —won't you ? Aunt Phœbe will boil everything ; even a roast leg of mutton she will boil first, and I know that Harry does not like it. And you will tell me what to do to make the baby grow big. I know by the way Harry looks at him that he thinks him a miserable failure."

"Why, 'tis a bootiful baby, for sure," said Eliza. "You'm narvical, my dear, and that's all about it. You'm narvical, and you wants a little divarsion."

The "divarsion" was soon produced by the antics of Eliza's cat. Eliza always said that Edith would never have got well but for that cat. To see Smut sit up and beg was so strange and unexpected in a cat, that Edith could not but laugh. She had had a cat which had been so ill-treated by Batheenie and her children that it ran away and never came back, and the house was overrun with mice. Smut, who had a deep sense of duty, went to work on the afternoon of his arrival, and soon rid the house of those pests. All these, as well as the field-mice and ground-squirrels he caught later on, he brought and laid down impartially at Edith's or Eliza's feet. Acting from the same sense of duty—in this case a little strained—he brought one day a garter-snake with its tail still quivering, and laid it down close by the baby. But, as Eliza observed, he would never have done that if he had not been sure that it was dead first. What with the amusement afforded by Smut's cleverness, and the comfort of being nursed by an affectionate old servant, Edith soon began to feel that she could take up all her little burdens once more, and not mind much even the baby's being so puny.

Mrs. Macgregor who was nothing if not practical, had the habit so much recommended by a learned divine to theological students, of verifying her references. When the story of the convict scare first appeared in the *Jonesville Mugwump*, the name of the lady who had been terrified was put down as Macgregor instead of Tregellas. Mrs. Macgregor's bewilderment on reading this was extreme. She drove over to the manager's office to inquire how it could have occurred, but Major Forepaw was absent, and Mr. Macfarlane professed complete ignorance of the matter. As soon as she supposed Edith would receive visitors she went to see her; taking a basket of late tomatoes as an offering to the invalid, and a large bag of gingerbread for the sustenance of her son Johnnie, who usually accompanied her in her excursions. She took the newspaper with her too, that Edith might see with her own eyes, if she had not seen already, what a flagrant mistake had been made.

Edith glanced at the paper, and said that it did not matter much.

"But it is incorrect," said Mrs. Macgregor. "I cannot think why Major Forepaw should have said such a thing, when, as you know, I never saw the convict."

"Given the same circumstances, the same thing might have happened to you," said Edith.

"But the circumstances never could have been the same," Mrs. Macgregor insisted. "If my husband had been called away, I should have taken care to have a pistol handy, and then when the convict came I should just have pointed it at him, and he would have made off immediately. Negroes are such cowards, ye know.

And then too, I keep a cook and a second girl, so that there would be no danger of my being left alone. 'Tis not likely that both of them would go off the same day. And—tell me—has that yellow girl never come back?"

"Never," said Edith.

"I should have thought she would come back to get her wages."

"I had paid her wages a day or two before," said Edith.

"Ah, that accounts for it! I understand that darkey's behaviour now."

Mrs. Macgregor's inquiries were cut short for the moment by her son, who began to thump loudly on the door and demand gingerbread. Mrs. Macgregor rose and gave him the bag, observing that Johnnie was very delicate and always required something to eat between meals. When she resumed her seat she remarked that Edith looked pale.

"Missus ain't fit to bear loud noises, nor overmuch talking," said Eliza. "Dr. Bontecoe said she was not to be flurried nor worried.—Them's his very words," continued Eliza with emphasis.

"Dr. Bontecoe was quite right, no doubt," said Mrs. Macgregor. "I shouldn't wonder if he got a practice by and by. He's just the right age; one does not feel confidence in a very young doctor. His charges are not very high, I suppose."

"I do not know," Edith sighed, weary of being catechised.

"Ah, no doubt ye'll know all that in good time. His charges ought not to be high. I'll give him a hint, if ye like."

"Oh," Edith cried, starting up, "pray, pray do nothing of the kind."

"Certainly not, unless ye wished it. I never meddle," said Mrs. Macgregor complacently. "Well now, perhaps ye could tell me the rights of the convict story. Was it true that Mrs. Macfarlane saw him in the distance and fired at him?"

Eliza interposed again. "If you please, ma'am, Dr. Bontecoe has forbidden missus to talk about that."

Mrs. Macgregor looked with disfavour at the English "body" who was taking so much upon her. Edith hastened to say that if Mrs. Macgregor would stay to dinner her husband would tell her all he knew.

Mrs. Macgregor accepted the invitation. She dared say that Mr. Tregellas would like some one to talk to.

"But there have been such conflicting accounts, and Mr. Tregellas was not there himself after all. It does not matter much, but I do always like to get a story at first hand.—Now I hope ye did not think it unneighbourly, —my not coming down at the time, I mean."

"Oh no," said Edith.

"Ye see, in a house like mine there is always so much to be done. Of course, if I could have imagined how things would be, I would have come away at once. But I could not have foreseen it, could I?"

"Certainly not," said Edith.

"It's quite different with Mrs. Macfarlane," Mrs. Macgregor pursued. "She can come and go as the notion takes her. 'Tis not as if her husband were farming, ye see."

"I thought he did farm," said Edith.

"I don't call that farming," said Mrs. Macgregor, with

a smile of pity at Edith's ignorance. "It's just an experimental station, that's all. And he potters about and gets his salary."

Edith remarked that Mr. Macfarlane had given her husband information which had proved of great use to him.

"Very likely," said Mrs. Macgregor. "Oh, don't suppose I want to speak against Mr. Macfarlane. He has a head upon his shoulders; but he's no farmer."

To change the subject, Edith asked Mrs. Macgregor what she thought of the baby. Mrs. Macgregor with great candour replied that considering all she had heard, it was not half so puny as she had expected.

"People exaggerate so, don't they? Of course he will never be such a boy as my Johnnie."—Edith in her secret heart devoutly hoped he would not—"But I don't see why he should not do well enough; and he may be clever, though he never can be big. There was Sir Isaac Newton, for instance. And Sir Walter Scott was lame, and so was Byron—and—"

"His legs are all right, bless him!" Eliza interjected. And Edith asked Mrs. Macgregor whether she would not see for herself.

"'Twas only an illustration," Mrs. Macgregor explained. "Sir Isaac Newton is a case in point however.—And now, tell me, are ye not going to call him Harmonius? Because," she continued, in answer to Edith's negative, "he's the first baby born since this place has been called Harmonia. I made sure ye would call him Harmonius. I told everybody so."

Edith laughed. "If I do, he will be called the Harmonious Blacksmith to the end of his days."

"I don't see how that could be," said Mrs. Macgregor, "unless ye apprentice him to a blacksmith. And I should suppose ye had other prospects for him. Besides, he'll never have an arm fit for a blacksmith."

At last Eliza in despair called in Harry to entertain the guest. "Her'll talk missus into a fever," she told him. Mrs. Macgregor improved the shining hour by giving him a multitude of valuable hints in farming, in housekeeping, in the care of babies,—for she considered Mrs. Tregellas a poor creature at the best of times: and talked so much and so long, that when she was gone Tregellas rushed into the woods, and said a good many things that he should not have said.

Until now, the intercourse between Edith and Mrs. Haverstock had been somewhat like an armed neutrality, for Edith could not quite forgive her poor opinion of men—including Edith's husband. Nevertheless she had stood by Edith in her extremity, and Edith was not slow to express her gratitude.

Mrs. Haverstock appeared taken aback. Her stern countenance became sterner. "It is not me you should thank," she said.

"I know what you mean," said Edith. "Indeed I am thankful that things turned out as well as they did for me. But I am grateful to my friends too."

"I mean," said Mrs. Haverstock, "that it was my husband who sent me. I did not take the initiative; it was his doing entirely."

"But the kindness to me was the same," said Edith, "only now I shall feel grateful to you both." Edith could never feel other than friendly to Mrs. Haverstock after that. Her refusing to take the credit of a good

deed when it did not properly belong to her, seemed so heroic—considering that had she held her tongue none would have been the wiser—that Edith perpetually found herself taking an attitude of mental admiration towards Mrs. Haverstock—in her absence. When present, it was only by an effort that she could remember what sterling uprightness lay hidden under the eccentric wilfulness and fanaticism which made up the Mrs. Haverstock of daily life.

As soon as Mrs. Bontecoe had assured herself that there was no likelihood of meeting her husband, she came to visit Edith and her baby.

"I don't think it is so very small," she said doubtfully. "I suppose it will grow big in time."

"I should hope so, ma'am, indeed," said Eliza, indignant that a married lady should say such a stupid thing.

Mrs. Bontecoe "assisted" with mixed curiosity and wonder, at the toilette of the tiny creature. "How does she manage to touch it without pulling it to pieces?" she said, as she watched Eliza's deft manipulations.

"La, ma'am, they ain't made o' gingerbread," was Eliza's remark.

By and by Mrs. Bontecoe asked timidly if she might hold the baby on her lap. Edith graciously assented, and they were presently laughing together at Mrs. Macgregor's taking it for granted that Edith would call the baby Harmonius.

They had talked of many things and then had been silent, as people who are spending a whole day together are apt to be. Edith happening to look up, saw that Mrs. Bontecoe was crying quietly. Eliza saw it too, and hastily snatched the baby from her lap. "Excuse me,

ma'am," she cried, "but it ain't lucky to drop tears on a young baby's face,—dear lamb!"

"I didn't mean any harm. I would not hurt it for the world," said Mrs. Bontecoe, wiping her eyes.

Edith signed to Eliza to take the child away. When the door was shut she put her hand in Mrs. Bontecoe's and said gently, "What is it? Tell me."

"Ah," Mrs. Bontecoe said, "how happy you are in your married life!—If I had had a husband like yours!" —and she wept unrestrainedly.

"You won your husband once. Try to win him again," said Edith.

"Ah, the first time was easy enough. It is not the winning, it is the keeping."

"He is very good and kind. Every one says so."

"Yes. Good and kind to every one except his own wife. Hard, hard to me as the nether millstone. That is the way with some men. If only I had known how to manage him!—But I never did. I never could manage anything or anybody. How do you do it?"

"Do what?" said Edith, smiling, though tears were in her eyes.

"Manage your husband."

"I do not manage him. I love him."

Mrs. Bontecoe shook her head. "There is something more in it than that. I was as much in love with Rupert as any girl could be. But after we were married, everything seemed to change so. I used to wonder sometimes whether I had only dreamt that I was in love, and that he was in love with me."

"I did not say I was in love," said Edith. "I said, I loved my husband. There is a distinction."

Mrs. Bontecoe looked puzzled. "I do not quite see it," she said. "And every one says you manage him. How else should he be so devoted to you?" Edith smiled, but did not answer.

"It would be so kind of you to tell me," she persisted, putting her hand in Edith's.

"Oh," cried Edith, "do you think I would not tell you, if I could—if there were any secret!—But I love him, and he loves me. That is all the secret. We have absolute faith in each other."

Mrs. Bontecoe was silent, as if reflecting. "That is the sort of thing which hardly ever lasts beyond the honeymoon, I suppose. Perhaps you are one of the lucky ones, just as I am one of the unlucky ones. I'm sure I hadn't been married a fortnight before Rupert began reading his tiresome medical papers and things at breakfast; and in the evening, too. That was not living for me much, was it?"

"You had your remedy. Why did you not read the newspaper, yourself? Then you would not have felt neglected."

"So I did once or twice, just to annoy him. But he never seemed to see it."

Edith laughed. "You asked how I managed my husband? I never did, and never shall do, things merely to annoy him."

"But then he never does things that annoy you."

Edith could make no answer to this. How could she make Mrs. Bontecoe understand that she and Harry would have died rather than act so as to annoy each other? Mrs. Bontecoe seemed to think that married life was a perpetual game of "tit for tat."

CHAPTER XI.

A KALMIA PATCH.

When Edith's aunts heard that Eliza and her husband were going to Harmonia, they sent for them; and, while Thomas was sumptuously entertained in the housekeeper's room, Eliza had a private interview with the old ladies, who did not let her go empty-handed, and entreated her to write and tell them everything about their dear niece. They had asked so many questions to which Edith gave no answer! They had misgivings that Mr. Tregellas was not making money. Certain it was that from the context of some of their niece's letters they gathered that she was in the habit of riding without an escort; and surely that was carrying things too far. If Mr. Tregellas were unable to accompany his wife, it was his duty to furnish a substitute. If he could not afford one, Miss Rachel declared that she would herself prefer to pay a groom's wages, rather than have the mortification of supposing that her niece was riding about alone. Eliza was entrusted with a private message, which both ladies desired to be delivered, but which neither had the courage to write. It was this: that if Mrs. Tregellas wished to come home,

money would be sent out for the purpose. "Of course her husband made her suppose that he was very much in love with her," said Miss Rachel. "It would be no small thing that would make a girl so well brought up as Edith forget her duty to her only surviving relatives. But all that may be changed now. If she wishes to come back, she shall come back." Eliza tried to say a good word for Tregellas, whom she had known, boy and man, for so many years ; but the old ladies hardly listened to her. Of course they hoped for the best, they said, but they could not believe that their niece could be quite happy in such a strange, out of the way place as Mr. Tregellas had chosen to settle in.

Eliza for her part could not see why the old ladies could not have kept their niece and their niece's husband too, had they chosen to do so. Here they were, growing older every year, all lonesome and "whisht" in that big house, and those two pretty dears gone out in the world to seek their fortune. There seemed to Eliza a strange crookedness in this ; and she wondered too, that the ladies did not see what a loss it was to themselves. How the big old staircases and wide corridors would be lightened up by the presence of the young and happy, the running to and fro of blithe feet which as yet had not felt the weight of years and sorrows! If she had such a big house to live in, with its walls full of pictures, and carpets everywhere, and clocks galore, would not she have her nieces with her, and her niece's children, and would not they all be comfortable together ? But gentle folks had strange ways, and it looked almost as if they liked to have a lot of empty rooms and be lonesome and whisht.

Perhaps it was in the hope of bringing the Misses de Glanvile to a sense of their duty to their niece, that Eliza when she wrote as she had promised, told a little more of Edith and her surroundings than Edith would have wished to be told. The Misses de Glanvile got a clear idea for the first time what sort of position their niece had put herself in, and they were shocked and mortified.

Edith had no drawing-room carpet, she slept on the ground-floor because there wasn't any up-stairs, and the house was built of wood even to the roof, and there was not a bit of wall to the garden, and the kitchen was a little house all to itself in the middle of the yard. And as for the blacks, Eliza wrote, they were not all black, because some were brown and some were almost white; but she had no opinion of any of them. And the dear baby had no cradle yet, but he had made his appearance before he was expected, so no wonder if everything was not quite as it should have been. But Thomas (who sent his humble duty) had killed a big snake that had crawled into the bedroom, and she had a cold turn whenever she thought what risks that baby ran. For his dear young ma would take and put him to lie on the floor as soon as look.

When the aunts had read Eliza's letter, they looked at each other. Hardly a sentence was there in it which had not given them a little stab.

Edith had no drawing-room carpet: and what a good carpet they had just given away to the under housemaid's rheumatic grandmother!

Edith was living in a wooden house with a wooden roof; and they had just paid for a set of pigsties built of brick and roofed with slate.

Edith could have no wall fruit, because her garden had no wall; and they had so much that they were giving it away to the people in the village.

But, that the baby should be without a cradle was worse than anything!

"Edith must be in worse circumstances than we imagined," said Miss Rachel. And Miss Elizabeth shook her head sadly.

"If she were not so proud!—It is very wrong for a young woman to be so proud," said Miss Rachel.

"Very wrong," assented Miss Elizabeth.

"I should like to send her a cradle. The idea of our niece's baby having no cradle!"—And Miss Rachel got up and walked about the room.

"Poor thing!" said Miss Elizabeth.

"I'll tell you what," said Miss Rachel, "I'll go to Exeter to-morrow and buy a cradle and send it out." As Miss Rachel lived farther from Exeter than from Plymouth, she thought Exeter cradles must be the best. Then Miss Elizabeth begged to be allowed to pay half. And there was quite a stir because of the suddenness of the contemplated journey, and maids ran up and down stairs—a thing which seldom happened in Miss Rachel's house. And they went to Exeter next day and bought the finest cradle they could get, and sent it out by a Cunarder that it might not get lost.

Eliza thought it a strange thing when, after that snake had been in the house, Mr. Tregellas, instead of setting off at once to buy a cradle for the baby, measured the length of the dead reptile, wrote it down in his pocket-book, and then carried the creature in to show his wife. She ventured to ask Edith if master was not going to get

a cradle. Edith replied that her husband had no such intention. He could not bear the noise of the rockers.

"I should hope, ma'am, master could bear it if 'twas his dooty," said Eliza.

"But it never will be his duty," said Edith.

"Well, ma'am, I should like for master to tell me how that baby is to be brought up without a cradle."

"Why not? Did you never know a baby brought up without one?"

"Iss sure, I know'd wan, an' a mis'bler little mossel of a thing I niver did see. He niver thrived; but allays looked climmed; an' he just dwawmed away like if he'd been pixy laid."

Edith laughed. "There are no pixies in America."

This was a wonderful fact, if true, and Eliza was silent for a while, meditating on it. But pixies or no pixies, she was sure that the baby's parents were beginning wrong in his bringing up.

When she heard from Edith that her aunts were sending out a cradle, she was glad; and felt sure that she had done her duty in mentioning the lack of one to the old ladies. But her joy was short lived. Tregellas received a notice from the New York custom-house to the effect that there was a cradle consigned to him, and that as soon as he had paid the duty, amounting to twenty-seven dollars, it would be forwarded. And Tregellas said that Edith's aunts were the silliest women in the world, and that he would pay duty for no cradle: not though Edith offered to have the rockers taken off.

Fortunately, Edith had written a warm letter of thanks to her aunts before the notice came from the

custom-house, and she did not tell them of her husband's refusal to pay the import duty. Seeing that the gift was well received, Aunt Rachel before long sent out another; this time happily not one liable to duty. It was a present to Edith of fifty pounds, with a request that Mr. Tregellas would let her dear Edith have a proper attendant when riding. It made her nervous to think of her riding alone. Edith said her aunt was very thoughtful and kind. Tregellas thought she was impertinent, and would have liked his wife to send the money back again. Edith laughed and said she might have taken that view some time ago, but now she wanted everything she could get.

"I wish it were a hundred!—I wish it were a million," she cried. "Oh, I understand now why people should try to be rich."

Tregellas stared at her. "Of all women," said he, "I should have said you were the least mercenary."

"I am not mercenary."

"It seems at any rate that you love money. Well, I am sorry I have so little to give you. I—I am sorry if you made a mistake after all."

Edith flew to him and put her arms round his neck. "Never think that," she cried. "I shall never want for myself one thing more than you can give me, dearest. It is only for baby that I want to be rich. Ever since I have had him I have been wishing that I had money to buy land for him, so that he might have something of his very own. Cannot you understand that? Eliza understood it perfectly."

"But, my dear, it is such nonsense. Why should you want to buy land for a baby?"

"It is instinct, I suppose. I want to give him everything."

Tregellas sat for a while in a brown study. Then he said: "Now I see how it is some men are so selfish. It is the fault of their mothers."

"As if," cried Edith, "I would bring up my boy to be selfish!"

"That is what you will do. What else do you expect? You want to give him everything. Why should he have everything? Why should he have anything?"

"Oh, Harry! Do not fathers toil all their lives that they may leave fortunes to their children?"

"Yes, and I have often thought what miserable fools they were. I would rather have my boy poor all his days, than that somebody should leave him a million. If there be any good in him, work may bring it out; but riches will be sure to develop the evil."

Edith pouted. "You are a perfect Diogenes. And after all, what have I got to spend? Just fifty pounds."

But the principle was the same, Tregellas said.

About this time Eliza began to go to Harmonia a good deal on some errand for her mistress. One day Edith was driven in to town by her old nurse, and when she came back she was in such high spirits that she began to dance and sing as if she were a girl.

"Do you see that hillside?" she asked her husband when he came in.

"Do you mean the kalmia patch?" said he.

"Yes. It belongs to baby. I bought it this afternoon with the fifty pounds Aunt Rachel sent me."

Tregellas sat down and laughed. "That kalmia patch! I think you must be crazy."

"There is some land besides the kalmia patch, of course."

"That fellow Forepaw has swindled you."

"I don't think so," cried Edith. "I have bought a hundred acres with my fifty pounds. I call that dirt cheap."

"It is not worth fifty pence. And now you have got it, what are you going to do with it?"

"There is plenty of time to think about that. You can let your sheep run on it when you have any."

"On kalmia brush? No, thank you."

"Well, baby can do what he likes with it when he is grown up."

"I think you are a baby yourself," said Tregellas, and went away laughing. Once during the evening he began to laugh without apparent cause, and when she looked at him inquiringly, he took her gently by the shoulders and said:—"What a wise woman this is! She would like her son to be a millionaire, and she goes and buys him a hundred acres of kalmia brush!"

At the foot of this same hillside, Thomas bought sixty acres of half-cleared land, which being at the foot had naturally a greater depth of soil than the hillside, and had the advantage of being a little nearer to Harmonia. Tregellas and Mr. Ellacombe helped to build a little log house for the good man, and he and his wife moved into it as soon as the chinking was dry. Eliza left the baby with many misgivings. She entreated Edith to trust it as little as possible to Aunt Phœbe. She had no opinion of the blacks. Aunt Phœbe for her part, had taken a liking to the baby and the baby's mistress,

and was well pleased to have the care of the little one without Mrs. Rosevear's supervision.

"I bin wid quality folks' chilluns all my life," she said once, when remonstrated with in regard to some omission, "an' I know my bisness when I ain't interrupted. Miss Sue ma she never interrupt me. She jes' lemme go 'long."

Once she absented herself for some hours, and Edith was afraid she had gone away offended. But she returned apparently very tired, and only chose to say that she had had "particular business." What this had been, Edith found out the next day, when she saw round the baby's neck a bit of black ribbon the old woman had begged of her. On cutting it off, she discovered a mole's foot tied up at one end of it; and this, she suspected rightly, had been the cause of Aunt Phœbe's absence. The mole's foot was a charm to make a child's teeth come easily, but to make the charm work properly, it was necessary that the child's nurse should catch the mole herself, and no one must know about her intention beforehand. When Mrs. Haverstock heard what Aunt Phœbe had done, she wondered at Mrs. Tregellas for keeping such a wicked old woman in her house. She was astonished that Edith should lay such stress on the poor old creature's devotion to her baby, and she thought it was not the right way to look at it, for Edith to say that two hundred years ago English ladies were quite as foolish as Aunt Phœbe.

But before long a much more serious thing happened in connection with the baby. The innocent child was the occasion for stirring up such strife that for a short time Harmonia should have been called Discordia.

CHAPTER XII.

DISCORDIA.

HARMONIA CHURCH had been built by the united subscriptions of all the settlers. There were some Scotch, a few Irish, and a good many English; and the English were almost all Church people. When the vestry was constituted and an Episcopal minister nominated, it was an understood thing that the fabric of the church belonged to the people, and that the same building was to serve, should a sufficient number of Presbyterians or Methodists or Campbellites desire to meet together and have their own service. So far these other services had not been required. The Reverend Josiah Bloss had been called by the vestry and approved by the bishop; and his ministrations, if they did not awaken enthusiasm, had the negative merit of not arousing opposition. Those who set themselves up as judges would say that if Mr. Bloss was not brilliant, he was safe. And if he had some volumes of old printed sermons from which he made copious extracts, why, the sermons were sound; and if they were not likely to improve with age, as port wine does,

neither would they deteriorate. On the whole, everyone was reasonably well satisfied with Mr. Bloss in the pulpit, except perhaps Mrs. Haverstock; who as it has been said in a former chapter, had taken an early and public method of showing her disapproval. Mr. Garlick, it is true, went rarely to church, but then Mr. Garlick was either a socialist or an agnostic, which accounted for his eccentricities. Dr. Bontecoe never went, because he said he hated cant, which meant, so Mrs. Bloss said, that he was a godless creature; and no wonder that sweet young woman could not live with him. The Ellacombes always went to church, and helped greatly to the edification of all the worshippers by the heartiness of their singing. When a fitting time came for the baptism of Edith's baby, that is to say, when the weather was neither too cold nor too hot, and when he was not fretful from his teeth, Mr. Bloss was notified by the baby's father, who mentioned that Mr. Ellacombe would be one godfather and Trelease the other, while Mrs. Ellacombe would stand proxy for Miss de Glanvile, his wife's aunt.

Mr. Bloss's dull, pompous features took on an expression of extreme solicitude. "Have you quite decided on Mr. and Mrs. Ellacombe?" he asked.

"Certainly," was Harry's reply. "As far as I am concerned, I would as soon as not have Mrs. Ellacombe herself as godmother:—as good a woman as ever lived. But my wife wishes her aunt to be godmother, which is quite natural. I asked Ellacombe, because I think he is a thoroughly good man; and I have the greatest respect for him."

Mr. Bloss nodded. "I have no wish to disparage Mr.

Ellacombe. Far be it from me. Nevertheless—" he twisted himself uneasily in his chair.

"I don't see how you, or any one, could say anything to disparage old Ellacombe," said Tregellas. "Such as he are the salt of the earth. I say it, though I'm no Methodist myself."

"That is just it," said Mr. Bloss. "Now, without intending any offence to you or to Mr. Ellacombe, could you not choose some one else for godfather?"

"I don't think I quite understand you," said Tregellas.

"And then—you said Mrs. Ellacombe was to be proxy for some other lady.—H—m! Proxy? I don't feel clear; perhaps that would not matter so much. But the godfathers should be members of this Church. That is important, you see."

"I don't see," said Tregellas. "Are you going to tell me that old Ellacombe is not a fit godfather for my child: for any child?"

"He does not belong to our Church," said Mr. Bloss with dignity. "It is within my power to refuse to recognize a member of another Church as godfather; and I feel it my dooty to refuse."

"I could not have believed such a thing," said Tregellas. "Are you serious?"

Mr. Bloss nodded portentously. "Perfectly serious. You see, Mr. Tregellas, we have certain rules for our guidance—"

"Do you mean to say, that the fact of old Ellacombe—about as much of a saint as you'll meet with in your earthly pilgrimage—being godfather to an infant whom you baptize, will get you into hot water with your bishop?"

"I don't say it would with Bishop Thrasher, but it might with some bishops."

"Then your refusal is an indulgence of a whim of your own, and not dictated by your conscience!" said Tregellas.

Mr. Bloss laid his head on one side. "I have been very lax—extraordinarily so—in the matter of Church membership. I have received you, and various others whom I could mention, as members of this church, on trust; that is, I have required no credentials—"

"Credentials! Credentials!" Tregellas repeated. "What do you mean?"

"You brought no letters of dismissal from the congregation to which you belonged."

"Letters of dismissal! I like that! Who is going to dismiss me from the Church of England, sir? Not the Archbishop of Canterbury himself could do it, sir, as long as I chose to belong to the Church!"

"I mean—a—a sort of voucher—"

"Mr. Bloss," said Tregellas, "I believe you are an Englishman by birth yourself, and if so you ought to know that it is mere tomfoolery—mere tomfoolery—to talk of an Englishman requiring credentials or vouchers or anything of the sort, in order to belong to the Church over here."

"I have not pressed the point, Mr. Tregellas. I said distinctly, it was a point which I had waived in other cases besides yours. But one must draw a line somewhere. I do not wish to lay myself open to the charge of laxity in connection with my office."

"Nobody wants you to do what is wrong,—I less than any man. Be sure I would never press a person to do

what he felt in his soul to be wrong. But—to object to such a man as old Ellacombe!—I cannot understand it."

Mr. Bloss, with his head on one side, said he must do his duty; and Tregellas bade him good-day and came away feeling heated and vexed.

"The thundering ass!" he repeated as he went down the street. "The thundering ass! By Jove! 'Dressed in a little brief authority' with a vengeance!—"

It did seem as if that baby never would be christened! Trelease, to whom Tregellas applied in his perplexity, hinted that, although he would be pleased to stand godfather, he had conscientious doubts as to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration as set forth in the Church of England office for infant baptism, consequently he prayed to be excused from reading it. Tregellas begged him not to say another word, and went to Mr. Denning. Mr. Denning did not absolutely refuse, but he showed himself unwilling. He had his doubts too. He suggested that Mr. Tregellas should choose godfathers belonging to the Church of England, and let Mr. Bloss perform the ceremony.

"I'll see the fellow in Jericho first," said Tregellas. "I'll have nothing more to say to Bloss, if I have to christen the little beggar myself. He'll have to put up with that or go without, if I can't get somebody to do it."

"Mr. Trelease is a clergyman," Mr. Denning suggested.

"Trelease has got baptismal regeneration on the brain, or some such rot!" said Tregellas wrathfully.

Mr. Denning smiled and then sighed. "Ah," said he,

throwing himself back in his chair, "he is very young, very young. He will get over that. Mr. Tregellas, do you really wish me to perform this office? I had scruples,—conscientious scruples—strained, perhaps. And yet, I should like to oblige you. And though I had, as I said, certain scruples, they are not of the nature of Mr. Trelease's. They are—but no—why should I trouble you with them?" He rested his head on his hand and was silent so long, that Tregellas began to feel himself an intruder, and rose to take leave.

"Are you in a hurry?" Mr. Denning inquired, rousing himself. "Your asking me to baptize the child took me back so many years!—That was a ceremony which I never could perform in a perfunctory manner. To be sure, in a country parish one has not dozens of children to baptize every week, so that the words of the office do not lose their significance from sheer iteration. But—whichever way one takes it, the office itself is so full of significance—so full of beauty! I remember having a great controversy on the subject of infant baptism with a Baptist preacher in my parish. I preached a sermon on the subject, which I afterwards published. I thought I had annihilated him completely, and I daresay he thought he had annihilated me. I was young then. I think I should hardly take the trouble now," he said with a smile. And again he leaned his head on his hand and was silent.

"Well—to get back to the business of the moment," he said presently, rousing himself; "is it to be public or private? In my younger days only the commoner sort, as a rule, brought their children to church. That is all changed; and a good thing too."

Tregellas said he would prefer it to be public. He had intended having the child baptized on Sunday during the service. But since Mr. Bloss objected to Mr. Ellacombe as a godfather, it would have to be some other day. He offered to call at the rectory on his way back and inform Mr. Bloss what day and hour the church would be wanted. Mrs. Bloss who opened the door, apologised for her wrapper and curling pins, and for the rector's absence, all in one breath.

"Oh, I reckon you can get the key when you want it," she said, when Tregellas explained why he wished to see Mr. Bloss. But it seemed to her a strange thing that Mr. Denning, rather than the rector, should perform the ceremony. Mr. Bloss, she thought, must surely have been quarrelling with Mr. Tregellas, and had been so ill advised as not to tell her about it. Tregellas took leave, saying he would write a note. But, on passing the post-office, he met Mr. Bloss on the doorstep.

"I have made arrangements about the christening," said Tregellas. "I was going to write a note, but as I have met you that will do. Mr. Denning has no objection to Mr. Ellacombe on the score of Methodism, so I have got him to christen the little fellow."

"Mr. Denning, eh?" said Mr. Bloss slowly.

"No objection to him, I hope?" said Tregellas.

"The question is, who is Mr. Denning?" said Mr. Bloss.

"Why, a Church of England clergyman, to be sure. Don't you know a parson when you see him?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Bloss, wagging his head from side to side. "That is just it. How should I know? How should you know?"

"By the cut of his jib, I suppose," said Tregellas.

"Appearances are sometimes deceptive. For aught I know he may be a unitarian, or an agnostic, or an atheist. He is hand and glove with Mr. Garlick, who is an out and out socialist; and I believe all socialists are atheists."

"I am not acquainted with the breed," said Tregellas. "But I am sure Mr. Denning is a regular old-fashioned English parson, if ever there was one."

"Oh, he looks like one, I grant you that. But what are looks?"

Tregellas laughed. "Somebody will be telling me next that I am a bogus lieutenant in the navy."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Bloss, "I suppose you have your credentials, or certificates, or whatever they may be called."

"I suppose I have."

"Whenever Mr. Denning produces his, I shall be ready to lend him the church."

"Of course he will have no difficulty in doing that. At the same time, it is a little awkward for me, don't you see?—to have to go back and tell him that, after asking him as a favour to officiate."

Mr. Bloss pursed up his lips. "It is my plain duty to see that the church does not suffer desecration."

Tregellas fired up. "Desecration! While you allow the church to be defiled with tobacco-juice every Sunday, I don't think you need talk of desecration."

This was a sore subject with Tregellas, who thought that at least as much respect should be paid to the church as to the quarter-deck. He had more than once urged Mr. Bloss to preach against the use of tobacco in

church, but Mr. Bloss had invariably refused. He could not afford, he said, to make a deadly enemy of Major Forepaw. Now Major Forepaw was the chief offender.

"I don't see what that has to do with the matter in hand," said Mr. Bloss. "Suppose Mr. Denning were a bogus clergyman—mind—I don't say he is,—he might take upon himself to join a couple in holy matrimony, and where should I be, then? And where would they be? That is a fraud that has actually been committed. Now, once satisfied that Mr. Denning is what he professes to be, he may baptize all the babies in the neighbourhood with my goodwill."

Tregellas went home and told his wife that, instead of matters being arranged, there was another hitch.

"And I cannot say that Bloss is wrong, this time," he added. "If I choose to take Mr. Denning on trust, that is no reason why he should. Of course he is bound to be careful."

"And of course we should not like baby to be christened by a bogus clergyman. But I think I have heard Eliza say that she had known Mr. Denning in her youth, when he was vicar of a country parish."

"Very likely. But we cannot very well bring forward Eliza as a voucher for Mr. Denning's genuineness."

"Of course not!"

"At the same time 'tis deucedly disagreeable for me, to have to tell a man old enough to be my father, that Bloss won't let him christen my child in church till he satisfies him he is not a fraud. For that is what it comes to, really."

"And yet, it is a thing that cannot be left to chance," said Edith.

"Certainly not. Edith," said Tregellas after a pause, "should you mind having him baptized privately? It would come to the same thing, and then we need not trouble our heads about Bloss."

"Oh!" cried Edith, disappointed, "I would much prefer the public baptism." But she agreed that the thing must be settled one way or the other. The weather might turn frosty or windy; and they had no comfortable carriage like Aunt Rachel's to take the darling to church in.

Finally, Tregellas decided on going to Mr. Denning and telling him what Mr. Bloss had said.

Seeing how much he disliked the errand, Edith offered to go herself. She thought she could say what had to be said without giving offence. "I will put on my prettiest hat," she said, "and smile my prettiest smile, and make him feel that the ungraciousness is the ungraciousness of Mr. Bloss, and that you and I feel that he is doing us a favour in christening the dear baby." Harry said the only objection to her plan was, that Mr. Denning might think he sent her because he funked saying the thing himself. No. He must do it, if it had to be done.

"It won't do for Bloss to go about saying that Denning is a fraud. He is just the kind of man to do that, unless he is satisfied by ocular demonstration that he is not. No doubt Denning will be able to show his commission, or whatever it is they call it."

Tregellas did not find Mr. Denning at home when he called, but was desired to wait. He sat down and looked

at the books on the table. There were among others a comparative grammar by a learned German, and two heavy tomes in plain board bindings, one in Italian, the other in a strange character unknown to Tregellas. While he was examining these books Mr. Denning came in.

"I thought you might be here this morning, so I did not walk far," said he. "You are looking at Gorresio's edition of the *Ramayana?*"

"The *Ramayana?*" said Tregellas.

"One of the great epic poems of ancient India."

"Indeed!" was all Tregellas could say. "But this is Italian."

"That is a prose translation. I was comparing it with the original. It is very fair—very fair. I was trying my hand at a bit, but I have got rusty. One does get rusty unless one keeps a thing up. I began a translation many years ago, but I did not go on with it. I—I got out of the groove—" he laughed a short laugh. "I am not one of those philosophers who could pursue learned disquisitions while the house was burning over their heads. I admire such men—from a considerable distance."

And this, thought Tregellas, was the man of whom such an one as Bloss would demand credentials!

"Well," said Mr. Denning, as he seated himself, "have you fixed the day for the christening of your son and heir?"

"That is what I came about," said Tregellas. He went on, blushing under his sunburnt skin. "Mr. Bloss has not finished with his objections yet."

"Indeed! And why is Bloss still in the objective case?" said Mr. Denning pleasantly.

"He is such an ass!" said Harry irritably. "Now he objects—I really beg your pardon for saying it—he objects to you! Says he does not know of his own proper knowledge that you are a clergyman of the Church of England. Says you may be an agnostic or a—unitarian—or—an atheist—for anything he knows."

"Or perhaps all three combined, eh?" said Mr. Denning with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes.

"I felt awfully annoyed, I assure you," said Tregellas, "He was so pig-headed about it. He quite put his foot down. I wish he'd put his foot down to some purpose, for something else."

"Yes, I know what you mean. We may all wish that. But 'you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.' In this particular instance, however, Bloss is quite right. He would have no business to lend the church to any one about whom he was not thoroughly satisfied."

"I'm glad you take his scruples in good part. I feared you might be offended. I thought him offensive, I know."

"I don't know much of Bloss. Somehow, we have never 'cottoned.' I think he resented my—superficial attainments. He is very—h—m—very poorly educated, as you perhaps have observed, and the unlearned can rarely forgive those who have a little more learning than they themselves have. 'Tis human nature. Poor Bloss can't help himself, you see. But in this particular matter he is quite right. Let me see," said Mr. Denning, gazing at the bookshelf on which lay a pile of books whose covers resembled those on the table.

"There is my sermon on Infant Baptism, and some bits of translation from the *Mahâbhârata*, and—but that won't do, of course." He sat still for a minute, with his head leaning on his hand. "If you will wait a little while, I will look and see whether I have with me the bishop's license to the perpetual curacy of Marystoke, which I resigned more than twenty years ago. I will not be sure. It may be in England. I have travelled about ever since my—my resignation. I have been in India, quite out of the beaten track; I have been in British Burmah; not travelling in splendour, you understand,—my means would not allow of that.—" He broke off.

"I am ashamed that you should be troubled," said Tregellas.

"No trouble at all. Bloss is quite right; I should do the same in his place. I ought to know where the thing is, but my memory is not so good now. I had an illness many years ago, and since then I forget things in the strangest way."

"Suppose you look for this document at your leisure," said Tregellas. "You can drop me a line when you have found it."

Mr. Denning shook his head. "No time like the present. If I began translating the *Ramayana* I might forget all about it, or why I wanted it. I have no one to remind me of things—now."

Saying that he would be back in half an hour, Tregellas took leave of the old man, and sauntered up the street to Mr. Garlick's.

Finding the house empty he went on to Dr. Bontecoe's. Here he found Mr. Garlick in the midst of a cloud of

smoke and a controversy with Trelease. He mentioned the new hitch that had occurred, and Mr. Denning's search.

Mr. Garlick jumped up, saying that he believed he knew where the document was better than Mr. Denning did.

"Poor old Denning! He gets so lost sometimes that one would suppose his wits were gone." As they walked up the street Tregellas asked whether he had known Mr. Denning long.

Mr. Garlick replied that he had known him from boyhood. His father, Mr. Denning, and the present Bishop of Sarum had been friends at Cambridge. Mr. Denning had been reputed to be much the cleverest of the three.

"But he is one of those men whose knowledge never seems to do them any good. He was talked of for a time as a rising man; that was while I was a schoolboy. And then there came an eclipse. He fell in love with a woman much younger than himself, resigned his fellowship and married. He got a perpetual curacy somewhere in the west, and there was an end of him. I was travelling in India when I met him again. He was a widower then, and had resigned his curacy and taken to wandering. I happened to fall in with him when he was down with fever, and was able to be of some use to him. That was ten years ago. Then I lost sight of him again till I came out here."

By this time they had reached Mr. Denning's house. They knocked and entered. Mr. Denning was on his knees looking over a pile of papers which he had taken from a packing case. He was muttering to himself as they entered.

"I cannot find it," he said, looking up. "And yet I did think I had it with me. It will be awkward if I have left it in England. I shall have to write to my man of business to look among certain papers he has of mine, and that will cause delay."

Mr. Garlick looked round. "I don't see your bullock trunk," he observed. "The document you want may very likely be there."

"Oh, no, I think not," said Mr. Denning. "What makes you suggest the bullock trunk?"

"When we joined company on the road to Gaur, ten years ago," said Mr. Garlick, "you were suffering from fever. That same night you were very ill. You believed yourself to be dying, and you bade me in case of your death take charge of a certain package of papers which were in a tin box in a bullock trunk and send them to——"

A sudden flush overspread Mr. Denning's face. He put up his hand to his head and staggered to a seat. "Is it possible I ever told you such a thing?" he cried, interrupting Mr. Garlick unceremoniously.

"I am sure I did not dream it," Mr. Garlick replied.

"I must have been off my head," said the other.

"Oh, no, you were sensible enough then. But you became delirious during the night, I remember."

"And talked sad trash, no doubt," returned Mr. Denning. As he spoke he went to the water pitcher which stood on a side table and drank a deep draught, standing with his back to his visitors.

"You spouted a good deal of Greek, I believe," said Mr. Garlick. "But I was too anxious lest all the servants should take fright and run away and leave

us in that desolate place, to attend to what you said."

When at last Mr. Denning turned round, the flush had left his face and he looked haggard and ill. He threw himself into a chair and passed his handkerchief across his forehead, muttering that stooping and pulling packing cases about did not suit him.

Tregellas apologized for all the trouble he had unwittingly caused, and begged him to desist from the search. If he would come to his house some day and baptize the child privately that would do as well.

Mr. Denning, who was lying back in his chair as if exhausted, sat up and spoke in a tone of authority such as he might have used had he been in the pulpit.

"It is the bounden duty of a father to have his child baptized before all the congregation. It is not an office to be slurred over or made light of. It is the infant's birthright to be brought into the community of the faithful in the most solemn and public manner, not to be smuggled in, as it were by the back door, as if his enrolment under Christ's banner were a thing to be ashamed of, and to be done in secret." He stopped, and resumed after a moment's pause in his usual tone:—"But, apart from all that, don't you see that, the question once having been raised, I must for my own sake seek for this paper till I find it, so as to satisfy Bloss that I am what I give myself out to be, a priest of the Church of England."

"Nobody doubts that except Bloss," said Tregellas. "And I don't suppose he really doubts it, either."

"But Bloss is exactly the man who must be more completely satisfied of it than any other man in

Harmonia. He dares not take me on trust.—Don't you see that?"

He rose and left the room, and they heard him overhead dragging boxes about.

The two men sat for a few moments in silence; then Mr. Garlick remarked that Mr. Denning would make himself ill if he over-exerted himself thus. He did not like the flushed look he had just now, and would go and help him. He went out and presently returned with Mr. Denning, who held a tin box in his hand.

"Garlick was right after all," said Mr. Denning to Tregellas.

He opened the box and took from it a small bundle of papers, which he unfolded one by one. There was one however in a sealed envelope, the superscription of which he merely glanced at, and then put it back in the box.

"Look," he said, spreading the papers on the table. "Here are, first, my letters of deacon's orders; secondly, my letters of priest's orders; and thirdly, what I was looking for when you came in: the bishop's license to the perpetual curacy of Marystoke."

"I should say that ought to be enough to satisfy fifty Blosses," said Tregellas.

"Let us hope so. I will take them to him at once." He looked at his coat. "Rather shabby, eh?" he remarked.

"What is the matter with it?" said Mr. Garlick. "It is quite good enough for Bloss."

"I hardly think so," said Mr. Denning. "Bloss is, I take it, like some dogs with whom I have been acquainted. He won't be so likely to snarl if he sees me in a decent coat. Excuse me for a moment."

When he came back he had transformed himself—as far as dress could do it—into a country parson of the old school. "Come with me if it is not out of your way," he said as he walked forth. When the three gentlemen were shown into the study of the rectory, Mr. Bloss, who was toasting his knees by the fire, rose with a troubled look, as if uncertain of what nature their errand might be.

Mr. Denning spoke first.

"Mr. Tregellas tells me you object to lend the church to me for his child's baptism till you have seen my credentials. I have brought them to show you." He spread the three documents out on the table. "You are satisfied, I hope," he said when Mr. Bloss had read them.

"Perfectly satisfied," the other returned. "Of course I always supposed you were all right; still I was bound to be certain for the sake of my flock. You know yourself that there is no telling who's who in these parts. No offence to you, sir."

Mr. Denning waved his hand. "No offence at all. I might have been an impostor for aught you knew."

"Oh," Mr. Bloss blurted out, "I'm sure everybody in Harmonia has the greatest respect for Mr. Denning."

"Much obliged to everybody," the other returned carelessly, as he folded up his papers and replaced them in his pocket.

"And what day do you propose having the christening?" Mr. Bloss asked.

Tregellas said the day after to-morrow would do as well as any. He would have to send a message to the Ellacombes.

"Ah," said Mr. Bloss shaking his head, "I could wish I had prevailed with you, Mr. Tregellas, to have had a godfather belonging to your own Church. I think you are wrong, sir. I can't prevent you, but I feel bound to protest."

"You can't tell me that my child's eternal welfare will be jeopardized because I give him a Methodist godfather, eh?" said Harry. He was not clever at theological argument, but he felt sure he had Mr. Bloss in a corner now.

Mr. Bloss pursed up his mouth. "Oh, no, no! I don't go quite so far as that. But there is the feeling of the thing, don't you see. Why choose a godfather out of your own communion?"

"But observe,—pray observe," said Mr. Denning, "a Methodist—at least a Methodist of the old school—does not deny the validity of any office or doctrine of the Church. The first Methodists considered themselves as forming a society within the Church. And moreover, you must remember that every Englishman's birthright is membership of the Church. He has a right to call upon her for every office and every sacrament which she can bestow, or he can participate in, from his infancy to his grave. See what a difference that makes, Mr. Bloss. The Church of England is no close corporation like the Churches in this country, or the various sects at home. She is the national Church, the common, spiritual mother of every Englishman."

"Well, well, that is just according to the view you please to take of it, I should suppose," said Mr. Bloss, who evidently did not covet an argument with Mr. Denning.

While the foregoing conversation was proceeding, Mr. Garlick had been examining the few books which formed Mr. Bloss's theological library. Looking round with one open in his hand, "By the by, Bloss," said he, "didn't you give us part of this sermon last Sunday?"

Now Mr. Garlick, who often abstained from attendance at church, had happened to go the preceding Sunday, and he remembered with distinctness certain paragraphs, good in substance though paltry in delivery, which were dovetailed with certain other paragraphs so exceedingly jejune in thought and so poor in diction, that he felt quite sure that these were the offspring of the Blossian brain, and that those were the offspring of the brain of some one else, with the diction of them modified *à la* Bloss. Now Mr. Garlick's question was simple enough, and put without any appearance of malice. But, to the surprise of all three visitors, Mr. Bloss's countenance showed the deepest annoyance.

"I was suffering from sick headache all last week," he said with an assumption of dignity, "and I was unable to study. The sermon had to be finished, whether or no: so I just—just made a few extracts which appeared to be—a—appeared to be appropriate. It would hardly do for a clergyman to get up and say he had not got his sermon ready."

"Why not?" said Mr. Garlick. "The congregation would get out half an hour earlier."

Tregellas laughed, and said he thought the women expected the sermon.

"You should fast twice a week, Bloss," said Mr. Garlick. "That, and some spade exercise in your garden, would soon do away with your headaches."

Mr. Bloss looked angrier than ever. "Mr. Garlick, sir!" he exclaimed, "we have no such papistical observances in the Episcopal Church."

But it was the allusion to the spade exercise which really made him wrathful.

"Papistical, is it?" said Mr. Garlick, meekly. "I speak under correction. I thought fasting was an ancient Jewish observance. What do you say, Denning?"

"Jewish: Jewish. Not a doubt of it," said Mr. Denning.

"By the by," Mr. Garlick remarked, as he put the book of sermons back in its place, "why don't you give us one of Robertson's sermons once in a way, when you don't feel up to writing one yourself?"

"Robertson!" Mr. Bloss pursed up his lips and shook his head. "Robertson is not sound."

"Not sound, eh?" Mr. Garlick inquired, with something between a sigh and a groan. "I suppose you never happened to hear him?"

"No, sir, I never did," said Mr. Bloss, in a tone which signified that he would not if he could.

"Ah! I did once. I was a mere boy, but I shall not forget it if I live to be a hundred. The chapel was packed to the very pulpit steps. Rich and poor, old and young, all were entranced. Such eloquence, such lucidity, I shall never hear again. Boys don't often listen to sermons, but none could have helped listening to that sermon."

"He was indeed the modern Chrysostom," Mr. Denning observed.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Bloss, "you see it's my place to

teach my flock right views. It don't so much matter about the eloquence. Mere eloquence won't save you nor me."

"It takes more than 'mere eloquence,' as you say," said Mr. Denning, turning to look at the books. "You ought to have the homilies to fall back on. I suppose there is no suspicion of their soundness. I have often read part of a homily to my people when I did not feel prepared. Of course that was in early days; one gets a stock of one's own in time to fall back on. But I believe you have not been in orders very long, Mr. Bloss?"

"No, sir, I have not," said Mr. Bloss. And evidently Mr. Bloss did not like the question any more than he liked Mr. Garlick's allusion to spade exercise.

"Well," said Mr. Denning, kindly, "I have a good many books, old and new. Come and look them over when you feel inclined."

And so they parted, leaving Mr. Bloss more sore and angry than any one of them imagined.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHO WAS THE THIEF?

WHEN the christening day was settled, a message was sent to Eliza through her husband, to say that Mrs. Tregellas wished her to accompany her to church and hold the baby.

Eliza was pleased, but she chose to take it as a matter of course that she should be asked. "Of course missus wouldn't give him to that old black woman to hold, with me there—I should think not!"

"And who's to do the christening?" said Eliza, recurring to the subject when the supper things were put away and she and her husband sat, he with his pipe, she with her knitting, one on each side of the fire with Smut between them.

Thomas took a whiff or two before he replied that Parson Denning was the man.

"Passon Denning!" said Eliza, almost jumping out of her chair. "Passon Denning! Are you quite sure, Thomas?"

"Sartain sure," Thomas replied.

"What ever shall I do?" said Eliza, half to herself.

"Do? Why, do nothing."

"Do nothing!" She went to the peg where hung her bonnet and shawl.

"Thomas, I ought to spake to missus before I'm an hour older. That man is a thief!"

"Be you 'mazed, 'Liza?" said Thomas peevishly, for he hated talking while he was smoking his pipe.

"Well, I'll wait till to-morrow, but I don't believe I shall sleep a wink to-night."

"I never see sich a woman as you be for going off both bolts," Thomas remarked. "An' arter all it ain't your business."

"There's a time to be silent and a time to spake, and I believe the time is come for spaking."

"Well, I wouldn't be so sartain sure. Ef they was to putt 'ee in the witness-box now an' mak'ee take your Bible oath, what could 'ee say agin passon?"

"La, Thomas! Haven't I told 'ee how 'twas the talk of the parish twenty years agone—how he stole the money the people had subscribed for the new school-house?"

Thomas grunted. Eliza went on.

"Twenty years agone last Michaelmas, and I minds it like if 'twas yesterday. Why, if he hadn't been a passon he'd ha' been sent to Botany Bay."

"Well, I want to know whether it is fair to blacken a man's character because of parish gossip you heard twenty years ago? If parish talk is to be brought up agin a body I say nobody would be safe; not the hold Admiral if he was alive, nor you, nor me. I don't hould wi' talk. I niver did," said Thomas, shaking his head.

"It might be parish talk, but 'twas gospel truth for all that," said Eliza.

"And he warn't took up, nor tried, nor nothing?"

"No. He and she just went off quiet like, and nobody know'd for sure where to. But I heerd tell 'twas to furrin parts where the bishop couldn't catch un."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Thomas. "You mean to tell me the bishop didn't disrate him? And he warn't took up and putt in the clink, nor nothing?"

"It was just as I say," said Eliza. "An' I'm going to spake to missus fust thing to-morrow. I can't stand by and see that baby christened by a man that's been a thief."

Thomas made no answer, but he filled his pipe again, which was a sign of perturbation of spirit.

When Edith saw her old nurse come in on the following morning, she supposed Thomas had made a mistake as to the day, but Eliza said Thomas had given the message right, only she wanted to speak a word, if missus pleased.

"Come in to the dining-room and have a cup of coffee," said Edith. "Mr. Tregellas is not in yet." She made her sit by the fire, and poured her out a cup.

Eliza made an attempt to drink it, but her mind was too anxious. She put her cup and saucer down on the hearth and said:—"I've got something on my mind I feel I ought to say, ma'am, and I hope you'll not take it ill. You know I'm as fond of you as if you were my own child—bain't I now?"

"Yes, you dear old thing, I believe you are," said Edith, patting her hand. "Now then, out with it. Have I been doing anything wrong with baby, and are you come to scold me for it?"

"'Tis about the dear baby, ma'am; but I bain't going to scold. I hope I know my place better. 'Tis about the christening. If you plaize, ma'am, I feel I ought to spake a word—"

"Well, it is high time he should be christened, you know," said Edith.

"But not by Mr. Denning, ma'am; not by Mr. Denning, that has no business to call hisself a passon," said Eliza, clasping her hands in her earnestness.

"What nonsense is this, Eliza!" cried Edith. "He is a clergyman, and a good and learned man. And I wish he were our clergyman instead of Mr. Bloss!"

"Missus, I want to know this: is a passon a ra'al passon that's stole money and run'd away? For that's what Passon Denning did, so sure as I'm sitting here."

"Eliza, Eliza, how can you say such things?" cried Edith.

"'Tis the truth, ma'am. An' if he christens that dear baby, it won't be christened right; an' it won't be lucky for him neither. Oh! don't 'ee go for to bring bad luck on your eldest. Don't 'ee now!—And his double teeth to come yet!"—said Eliza with tears in her eyes.

"But my dear creature, I feel so sure that you are mistaken," Edith began.

Tregellas's step and voice were heard outside, and Eliza rose. "It's no mistake, ma'am, though you've only my word for it. It's as true as true."

Edith bade her stay with the baby till she had given Mr. Tregellas his breakfast. "As for me, you have quite taken away my appetite, though I don't believe a word of what you have been telling me," she said.

When Harry had been told the errand which had brought Mrs. Rosevear over so early, he laughed aloud, and declared that it was the biggest mare's nest ever invented. When Edith proposed that they should have Mrs. Rosevear in and hear if she had anything more definite to tell, he at first refused, saying that it would be an insult to a learned and respectable man to listen to any such slander against him.

"But," said Edith, "let us distinguish. Eliza is much troubled about it. She has not come to tell me this tale in a gossiping spirit. She tells me because she is afraid lest some bad luck should come to baby if Mr. Denning christens him. No doubt it is all a mistake. But she believes it, nevertheless."

Tregellas was persuaded at last to see Eliza and hear what she had to say: though he declared beforehand that nothing should induce him to believe that such a man as Mr. Denning was a thief.

"Now Eliza, I am going to cross-examine you," he began. "You say Mr. Denning stole money and ran away. How do you know that?"

"'Twas the talk of the parish, sir," said Eliza.

Tregellas asked whether it seemed to her a right thing to take away a person's character with parish gossip.

That, said Eliza, was like what Thomas had said. Being further pressed as to her knowledge, she could only say it was a thing that had never been contradicted, as far as she knew. She had been parlour-maid at the rectory of Stoke-upon-Hill, when Mr. Denning was the parson of Marystoke, the next parish. Her master and Mr. Denning were friends, and Mr. Denning would

constantly drop in about tea time and talk politics and argufy by the hour. And all at once there was this cry got up against him; that he had stolen money which had been subscribed by the parishioners for building a new school house. And then before a body could turn round like, or there was any clear knowledge of what was to be done to him, he was gone, clean gone as if he had melted away; he and Mrs. Denning both; and there was a new parson at Marystoke. That, she would take her Bible oath to; and his name was Chumleigh West. "Some folks did say as how the bishop had put Passon Denning out, but most said he'd run'd away 'cause he was afeard o' the bishop and the law."

Tregellas considered for a moment. There was no gainsaying Eliza's thorough belief in the tale she told; but as she herself admitted, it was all hearsay. On the other hand, there was a man of Mr. Garlick's stamp ready to vouch for Mr. Denning. Tregellas mentally weighed Mr. Garlick's words, even the very tones of his voice, as he had spoken of his elderly friend. It was impossible that one man should so speak of another were that other a thief. Nor would such a man as Mr. Garlick, a man of scientific tastes and apparently in easy circumstances, allow himself to be so intimate with a thief. It was evident from what he had said, that, though he had lost sight of Mr. Denning for long intervals, he knew the principal facts in his life. He knew of his marriage, his resignation of his living, his wife's death, wandering about the world. Tregellas told Eliza of these grounds for his belief that she must be mistaken. But Eliza would only shake her head and say that time would show. And how was it neither

Mr. nor Mrs. Denning ever came to say goodbye to the family at Stoke-upon-Hill rectory?

Nor was it till Edith had convinced her by reading to her the Twenty-sixth Article out of the Prayer-book, that the baby's christening would be valid in any case, that Eliza would be persuaded to attend the ceremony. She came, dressed in her best, with a lugubrious countenance, and a Cassandra-like feeling that if anything did happen to the child in his teething, she would know how it had come about.

There had been a rumour that Mr. Bloss and Mr. Tregellas had had a difference, though what that difference was nobody seemed to know. Some, who had heard that Mr. Denning was to perform the ceremony, supposed that Mr. Bloss would forbid him; and these attended church, uninvited, to the detriment of their domestic concerns, in the hopes of seeing a battle royal. There was no battle royal, but there was something quite as unexpected: an address delivered by Mr. Denning in his surplice, not from the pulpit, but from the reading desk.

He himself had not intended to give one when he entered the church. If he had been asked to do so, he would have stoutly refused, and would have abode by his refusal.

But when he saw around him this little company of his own country people, so many thousand miles away from their dear fatherland, a sudden sense of their common exile, and of the common loss they suffered in that exile, overcame him. And because of this the fire kindled within him, till at last he spoke as he had not spoken during all the years he had been a wanderer. He

addressed them as fellow pilgrims in search of a better country, as fellow members of that glorious and beloved Church who is the common mother of every Englishman. He spoke comfortable words to the English Methodists present, declaring to them that the Church of England was their Church as well as his Church; that, whether or no they chose to recognize their heirship, they were co-heirs together. He reminded them of the origin of the English Church, and drew a parallel between the great baptizing of the multitude in Jerusalem and in the Jordan, in the first days of the Christian Church, and the baptizing of the ten thousand heathen Saxons by Augustine and his monks. Then he spoke of the origin of the rite, of the various ceremonies which had gradually crept in, and which had been abolished by their own Church when the spiritual yoke of corrupt Rome had become too grievous to be borne; also of the controversies which had arisen in the early Churches respecting infant and adult baptism; giving them from the stores of his erudition the *dicta* of the various Christian writers for and against. He told them how the baptismal robe, which it was the natural and commendable desire of a mother to have as costly as her means would allow, to enrobe her darling withal, was a survival of the ancient custom of the chrisom, the white vesture in which the infant was wrapped after its baptism. In conclusion, he entreated his hearers to remember constantly with glad hearts, in what a glorious heritage they were participators, and bade them be thankful all their lives that they were among the company of the baptized in the Church of England.

The hearts of the little company were stirred, and

many pressed round Mr. Denning at the church door to thank him for his words. Among these Mr. Ellacombe was foremost. "Sir," he said, offering his hand, "if all clergymen would preach like that, I believe there would be less dissent."

Mr. Denning, who appeared to shrink from the thanks and greetings, said, smiling, "Ay, ay, if John Wesley and John Wesley's father had not been priests of the Church of England, where would you Methodists have been?" and then he slipped away, and walked quickly to his own house, sending a message to Mrs. Tregellas to excuse himself from dining with her that day.

As does happen sometimes, those who felt the most said the least. These were Thomas and Eliza, and Trelease the ex-curate.

Mrs. Macfarlane was the only American in the invited company, and a good deal of the discourse was over her head. She however happened to be listening while Mr. Denning was explaining the ancient use of the chrisom, and the practical effect of that part of the discourse on her, was the laying out of twice the amount of money she had intended to spend, on a fine piece of lace to finish off her baby's christening dress, and a determination to have the baby christened the very next Sunday after the dress was finished.

Thomas Rosevear, who at various times since his marriage had been urged by class leaders and local preachers to join the "connexion," and who had felt himself more than once on the verge of giving way, declared that after hearing such a discourse as Mr. Denning's nothing would ever draw him away from the Church. A churchman he had been born, and a churchman he would die.

Eliza, who had listened attentively—wondering all the time how a man should be able to preach like that, and yet be a thief—Eliza said the discourse was very fine, but if you came to talk of gospel, she didn't see much gospel in it for her part. And what a hypocrite he must be!

"I don't know what you'd have," said Thomas. "You'm somethin' like those folks I hearn tell about in church that had a strong deloosion so that they should believe a lie."

"An' 'tain't no lie neither," said Eliza. "An' I du call it a very onbecomin' thing for a man to go a-quotin' Scriptur' agin his own wife."

"I'm dashed if I knaw'd 'twas Scriptur'," said Thomas.

"Now Thomas, don't 'ee swear: now don't 'ee."

"I bain't swearin'," said Thomas stoutly. "I never du swear. The hold Admiral says once, says he, to the fust lieutenant—'twas when he was cappen of the *Arethusa*—says he, 'I don't allow swearin' on board my ship, sir. It's dem'd ungentlemanly: dem'd ungentlemanly.' So it is."

Thomas gave his opinion in full, the next time he found himself at work in Tregellas's garden.

"That's what I call a ra'al passon. A man that can give chapter and varse and go to the root o' the matter like, without any fumblin' and stumblin' and hummin' and hawin', an' saying Oh Lord, and a-thumpin' o' the cushion as if he was going to bate the dust out of un. That's the kind o' passon for me. Talk o' bishop disrating of he! He ought to be a bishop hisself. I told 'Liza, says I, 'You may talk till doomsday afore you'll

make me believe that a learned gentleman like he stole money. It's all my eye, you know.' I've lived wi' gentlemen all my life, an' I'm proud to say I knaws a gentleman when I sees un. Now, if any one told me that there Bloss had stole money, I'd not think more than once or twice about it. A' looketh bilious mostly, like a little greengrocer that doth not pay his way. A fellow that doth not know a B from a bull's foot, I say, an' had not the wit to raise so much as a crop o' curly greens where he come from: so the folk du say. No sir, 'Liza is a well maning woman. I bain't a-going for to run down 'Liza arter being joined wi' her in holy matterimony so many year. But her hath got hold of the tale by the wrong eend, an' her can't let go of it to save her life. Faymales is that way, mostly, an' a' believe they can't help themselves, so we husbands has tu putt up with 'em."

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. DENNING APOLOGISES.

Now Mrs. Bloss had peeped into the church while the christening was going on, out of curiosity to see the baby's christening robe ; which, as Mrs. Macfarlane had told her, was of costly lace and satin, and had been sent to Mrs. Tregellas by her aunts in England. She saw it at a distance ; but what woman was ever satisfied with seeing real lace at a distance ? Mrs. Bloss at least could not be satisfied till she had felt it and fingered it, and held it up to the light and found out its exact cost. So she sat down and waited till the ceremony should be over, and thus she became a hearer of the address which Mr. Denning had intended only for his compatriots. It would be saying too much for Mrs. Bloss's mental calibre to say that she appreciated the address either in its erudition or its eloquent simplicity ; but she was fully sensible that she had never heard anything in the least like it before. And she heard the sounds of approval and the thanks addressed to Mr. Denning at the church door, as she pressed forward to see the baby which Eliza held in her arms. She heard too, just at her elbow, that chit of a girl, Kate Haverstock, wish that Mr. Denning would preach every Sunday, because then

there would be some pleasure in going to church. She went home wrathful because of this; and though she did not tell Mr. Bloss this particular item, what she did tell him made him even more wrathful than she was herself. The news she told at the dinner table was that Mr. Denning had preached a sermon—or as good as a sermon—from the reading desk, after the christening was over. So disturbed was Mr. Bloss, that Mrs. Bloss wished when it was too late, that she had kept her news till after dinner. He sent away his fried chicken untouched, nor could his appetite be brought back by sweet pickled peaches. He was sure that Mr. Denning had stolen a march on him, to show off his English college learning and make him—the rector—small in the eyes of his flock. He felt all the more angry because of the discovery Mr. Garlick had made; and he was ready to execrate his own folly in not having kept his private books under lock and key. That Mr. Denning should have said that he himself had frequently read a portion of a homily in his younger days, had not comforted Mr. Bloss at the time, nor did the remembrance of it tend to assuage his wrath. It did not matter whose sermons he preached, as long as they were sound, but that he should preach sermons which had not proceeded from his own brain was, he conceived, entirely his own private business: just as private as if he dyed his hair or wore false teeth.

"I call it a mean trick of Mr. Denning," he said. "If he wished to occupy my pulpit, why could he not come and ask me in a straightforward manner?"

"It was real mean, if you look at it in that way," said Mrs. Bloss.

"I don't know in what other way I am to look at it," said he. He had not told his wife the episode of the book of sermons.

"He didn't get into the pulpit; he just stood at the reading desk, sort of sideways," said Mrs. Bloss, wishing to minimise the effect of her news.

"It comes to the same thing. It was a mean trick. Of course he wanted to air his Cambridge learning," said Mr. Bloss with a bitterness he could not conceal.

"Well, he is learn'd," said Mrs. Bloss, who felt that as there was no gainsaying the fact she might as well make a merit of acknowledging it. "Yes, I should say he was quite a learn'd man. He talked as if he had been acquainted with them all.—Fathers he called them—Irenæus and Tertullian and Augustine and Gregory and I don't know who besides. Yes, he reeled it all off by heart, just so. He hadn't a scrap of paper with him. I could see that from where I sat."

"Augustine and Gregory!" Mr. Bloss exclaimed. "Are you sure, Araminta?"

"Certain, because it made me think of Dr. Gregory's syrup, that I used to take for my cough when I was a girl."

"Pshaw! Gregory was a pope. And Augustine—Augustine was either a Roman Catholic bishop or a monk. He was a Roman Catholic anyhow."

"Well, you couldn't have told that by what Mr. Denning said. Come to think of it, he called Augustine a missionary, and likened him to the missionaries that go out nowadays to Burmah and Africa and those places. That 'intrepid missionary' he called him, 'who went among the heathen of that distant isle with no

powerful government to back him, no man of war's guns to avenge him if he lost his life, but only in the strength of the Lord God.' Those were his very words. And then he told how he baptized ten thousand at once: with assistants, of course. I thought to myself, they must have been mighty smart, and even so they must have dipped them by bunches. The Bible tells of three thousand being baptized at once, and I don't see well how they could beat that record."

"Oh," said Mr. Bloss, "I suppose he would call that tradition! Tradition!"

"Well, tradition or not, it sounded mighty fine. Only I don't see after all what business he had to bring Roman Catholic monks and popes into a sermon."

"What business, indeed! I shall let him know what I think of it," said Mr. Bloss.

Mr. Bloss found no reason to alter his resolve by what he heard when he walked abroad the next day. The first person he met was Major Forepaw, and the first word Major Forepaw uttered showed that he had gone over to the enemy.

"Why," he cried, "what's this? Quite a shining light we have got in the midst of us, and all under a bushel. Did not you know anything about it?"

Mr. Bloss professed his ignorance.

"Do you mean to say you did not know? Why, right here in Harmonia, we have the most elegant preacher! Macfarlane happened in church yesterday morning while that christening was going on, and was mightily enthused. Says Mr. Denning's got the finest delivery of any preacher he's heard since he left the old country."

"Oh, you allude to Mr. Denning?" said Mr. Bloss.

"Say, you should lend him your pulpit once in a while. It would draw, depend on it."

Mr. Bloss put on his gravest look; he became indeed quite as grave as if he were an undertaker conducting a first-class funeral. "Major," he said, "you speak of the pulpit as if it were a kind of stage."

"Well, it is, sorter. People do like to be interested, I know that much. And they will go to the house that offers the greatest attraction. You can't blame them for it, either. When they can pay their money why shouldn't they take their choice?"

Mr. Bloss frowned. "I do not expect," he said, with great deliberation, "ever to ask Mr. Denning to occupy my pulpit, sir."

"Suit yourself," said the Major, changing his quid. "I don't care. I was just thinking whether we couldn't induce him to give us a lecture or two on some popular subject. People seem to want something to wake 'em up; seems a pity to have a man right here who can orate, and not make use of him."

"That may be all very well," said Mr. Bloss. "That is your business, not mine. Mine is, to see that wrong doctrine is not preached in my pulpit."

Major Forepaw turned on his heel, muttering that it was hard to tell what was wrong doctrine in these days, and Mr. Bloss went his way up the street, his temper by no means improved by the colloquy with his churchwarden.

There was the usual group gathered in front of the grocery, waiting till the postmaster should have sorted

the mail bag which had just arrived. And towards the group Mr. Denning was advancing slowly.

So far, Mr. Denning and Mr. Bloss had had the slightest possible acquaintanceship. As Mr. Denning had expressed it, they had never "cottoned." Mr. Denning, it is true, had been always careful to give a courteous "good day" to his younger clerical brother, and there had been occasions when they had shaken hands. But nothing like a friendly intercourse had ever sprung up, or seemed likely to spring up: there had never been anything like an exchange of newspapers, or of books, still less of clerical views. They had held off, each from the other. To Mr. Denning it was a matter of amazement—sometimes even of indignant amazement—that one so little fitted to guide men as the Reverend Josiah Bloss, should have been placed in the position of minister even in such a pioneer settlement as Harmonia. He had heard of Mr. Bloss's career, such as it was. It was quite an open secret, and there was nothing in it that could be called intrinsically discreditable. He was the son of a tenant farmer in one of the eastern counties, and had emigrated to the State of New Jersey expecting to make his fortune as a market-gardener. Failing signally in the attempt, he had contrived to gain admittance into a theological seminary connected with the Episcopal Church, taking advantage of the assistance tendered to young aspirants of small means; whence, after following the prescribed theological course, he had emerged as a deacon. After passing a year in that chrysalis state in a small, obscure parish, where, if he had but little power for good, he was equally powerless for harm, he had been ordained

minister. He had married immediately after his ordination, and had spent the few years between that and his coming to Harmonia at various places, resigning each parish for some particularly good reason; a reason sometimes connected with his wife's health, sometimes with his own, but chiefly on the score of the want of support given him by unappreciative congregations. There was nothing against the man as far as his origin went. The great missionary, Moffat, began life as an under-gardener, and others have sprung from even lower in the ranks than he, and have attained as high, and higher. It was neither the market-gardening nor the failure in the market-gardening that was against Bloss, it was Bloss himself. He was wont to magnify his office, and was exacting in his demands on his parishioners' respect, because of his office. But how should a man be respected in Harmonia or elsewhere, who had gained for himself the reputation of caring for his loaves and fishes and for little else? This was the reputation Mr. Bloss had gained for himself. All that he did get, he felt to be no more than his due, and when the loaves and fishes were scanty, when hams and chickens, and pounds of butter and barrels of flour, came not like the heavenly manna, in gentle succession, so that he had to put his hand into his pocket and pay for his housekeeping, he grumbled loudly in the vestry, and carried his railings even into the pulpit; belabouring his flock with chapter and verse both from the Old Testament and the New; deeming that they well deserved a whip with as many such scorpions as he could tag on to it.

Such a course is hardly likely to make a man

respected in his parish. Add to this his bodily presence which, owing to the disuse of the out-of-door manual labour to which he had been bred, was heavy and pompous, but devoid of dignity; his shallow education, and a delivery so bad that it made his poor, thin discourses sound even poorer and more jejune; and it will, perhaps, provoke the indignant wonder of others besides Mr. Denning, that one so badly equipped should come to be trusted with the cure of souls, even in Harmonia. And Mr. Bloss was hardly likely to improve as years rolled over his head. For having so little learning he thought little of it, and carefully nursed in himself the delusive idea that learning, mere carnal learning, was detrimental to the delivery of the pure Gospel. It had never occurred to him to ask how it would have fared with him in his feeble ministry of the Word, but for the carnal learning of churchmen of a former generation; for, though he had gone through the required course of study at the theological seminary of Chinquapin, he would have been hard bested had he been required to expound the New Testament from the original Greek, or the Old from the original Hebrew.

Such was Mr. Bloss. Yet, perhaps, in spite of the keen sense of his shortcomings which often possessed Mr. Denning, the English clergyman was the man in Harmonia who made the most allowance for him. He felt sorry for the flock, but he also felt sorry for the shepherd. He would not permit his only crony, Mr. Garlick, to poke fun at the rector's pomposity, nor at his bad grammar, nor at his publicly expressed desire for more loaves and fishes. "We do not know," he would

say. "We do not know what trials the poor man may have of which he says nothing. He does not show very good taste, but how should he? What chance has he had of learning good taste?" So he would not condemn, if he could not praise. And more than once, when rectorial complaints of the parsimony of the congregation had reached his ears, he had sent anonymously a few greenbacks in an envelope, carefully disguising his handwriting. And when Mr. Bloss got these anonymous contributions, he would take them in the same spirit in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer receives bank notes as conscience money. The Chancellor of the Exchequer feels no gratitude to the anonymous senders of bank notes. Neither did Mr. Bloss.

"If those who sent Bloss out thought him fit, why should he not suppose himself to be fit?" Mr. Denning would say, when Mr. Bloss had given a more convincing proof than usual of his ignorance and general unfitness.

Mr. Denning then, on this sunny afternoon, was coming towards the post-office, thinking of nothing in particular, except that the sun was pleasant, and that there had been no real winter weather yet; when, just as he reached speaking distance of the group waiting for letters, towards him comes Mr. Bloss with "rector of this parish," writ large on his sallow countenance. Now Mr. Bloss, like most men who conceive themselves to be spiritually gifted, was apt to be instant in season and out of season; but more especially out of season. Mr. Denning had the sun in his eyes, which obscured his clearness of vision,

but as soon as he had got under the shade of the grocery awning, and could look straight before him without blinking, he saw Mr. Bloss regarding him as though Bloss were St. George, and he himself were the dragon.

Mr. Denning who, when he went to walk alone, was always more or less in the clouds, came out of his abstraction as the sun went out of his eyes and he saw the eyes of his brother clergyman turned full on him. "The poor man looks worried," he said to himself. "Perhaps he is thinking about next Sunday's sermon. His sermons must be a heavy burden to him. Perhaps he is coming to ask me to lend him some of my books." Thinking thus, he gave Mr. Bloss a kind good-day, and put the question. "Because," he added, "if that be so, I will be at your service in a moment. I only came to get my letters."

"No, sir," was the reply of Mr. Bloss. "I was not intending to come to your house to-day."

"Some other time, then," said Mr. Denning courteously. "I shall be always glad to see you," he added, though the tone of the other was as little courteous as could be.

Then Mr. Bloss felt that now, if ever, he must smite his enemy.

"Mr. Denning, sir," he began in a voice loud enough to be audible to all the bystanders, "I was sorry—a—sorry to hear that you had stolen a march on me yesterday."

"Stolen a march!" Mr. Denning repeated. "I don't think I quite understand."

"Yes, sir, I call it stealing a march when a gentleman gets up and preaches a sermon which he has not been requested to preach."

"I have not been preaching," said Mr. Denning. Then it occurred to him what the man was driving at. But yet it seemed impossible that even Mr. Bloss should be so foolish. So he waited to hear more.

"You tell me you have not been preaching?" said Mr. Bloss. "Then, sir, I have been misinformed. I was told by an eye-witness—a credible eye-witness—that you had preached a sermon after the christening yesterday."

"You have been misinformed," said Mr. Denning. "I preached 'no sermon. I have not preached for twenty years. I don't think anything would induce me to get up in the pulpit and preach a sermon."

"But you don't mind preaching one from the reading desk, eh? Now I call that jesuitical; distinctly jesuitical," said Mr. Bloss, giving an angry dig with his walking stick into the ground as he uttered the word jesuitical.

Mr. Denning had a temper as well as Mr. Bloss. But he knew how to control it, which Mr. Bloss did not; and he had some sense of humour, which again Mr. Bloss had not. It may be said with truth that among the lower animals there are to be found instances of the possession of a sense of humour which would have been a treasure to Mr. Bloss had he possessed it.

When the colloquy had proceeded so far, Mr. Denning felt how supremely ridiculous a figure they would both cut, if the discussion went any further on the same lines. Here would be a sight to rejoice the mockers, if one episcopal clergyman were heard in the open street reiterating his accusation that the other had preached a sermon which he had no business to preach; while the

other steadfastly denied that he had preached a sermon, or ever would preach one.

"Suppose we walk on," he said, speaking in a key lower than the one Mr. Bloss was using. "Or, shall we go to my house and talk it over? I should like to explain."

Mr. Bloss, being, as it has been said, destitute of all sense of humour, thought that Mr. Denning lowered his voice because he shrunk from receiving a public rebuke.

"I don't see myself what there is to explain," he said. "I don't call it acting on the square; that's what I don't. A gentleman comes here, and never introdooces himself as a brother labourer in the vineyard; never comes forward in any way, though I am sure, speaking for myself, I should have been quite ready to give him the right hand of fellowship. And then, by a mere chance it appears that he's a minister, as one may say, under the rose. And—"

"Bloss, my boy, you've had a drop too much," said a voice in the crowd.

Mr. Bloss gasped, as though he had received a dash of cold water on his face. He turned round sharply to meet this railing accusation. "What—who said that?" he cried. But no one answered. There was a little outburst of laughter, and then the crowd melted away. Mr. Denning was gone, and only Major Forepaw was to be seen coming out of the store with his letters.

"I didn't know you could give yourself away like that, Bloss," he remarked. "I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

Mr. Denning went home and wrote a note to Mr. Bloss, in which he assured him that he never had the

least idea of usurping his functions when he addressed a few words to his fellow countrymen, who were perhaps like himself, feeling peculiarly drawn together on that occasion. He concluded by asking his pardon if he had unwittingly offended. It was a letter that none but a gentleman could have written. But then, as Mr. Denning said to Mr. Garlick (who had heard something of the matter from Mr. Macfarlane, and who declared that Bloss should be made to apologise), it is so easy to meet a man more than half way when one knows one is not in the wrong.

And how did Mr. Bloss receive the letter? He found it lying on the parlour table when he got back to his house after making a few pastoral visits. It had not been opened. Mrs. Bloss had turned it round and had looked at the seal and superscription, but she had refrained from opening it. It was an understood thing that one of the rectorial privileges was the opening and first reading of letters addressed to the rector. It was equally understood that the second reading (and the bulk of the commentary thereon) was one of the privileges of Mrs. Araminta B. Bloss.

The rector saw the letter lying on the parlour table through the open door, and took it up. He had come home, still somewhat heated, for, if he had dealt hard knocks, they had also been dealt to him. He would have given a great deal to know whose voice had twitted him with tipsiness at that hour of the day. He would have liked to name that slanderer in his next Sunday's sermon. And his ears had tingled when the Major told him that he had given himself away. If such was the Major's opinion, might there not be others of

that opinion? But Mr. Denning's letter acted as a salve. Whatever knocks he had received, it was clear that those he had given were much the hardest. There was so much salve in that knowledge that his ears ceased to tingle, and his countenance became clear and almost smiling as he sat down and mended the fire, which had fallen to pieces. There was a smell of savoury frying too, as if something good was being prepared for supper. So that he felt as he looked at the blazing hickory, that the world was not such a very evil one after all.

Mrs. Bloss who had heard the street door open, came in from the cook-house, bringing with her an increased odour of frying. "Oh, you are back," she remarked. "I reckon supper will be ready pretty soon. I told the darkey to make some waffles: you ate such a miserable dinner."

"A man cannot enjoy his food when he is perturbed in spirit," said Mr. Bloss running his hand through his greasy, ill-cut hair.

"I should say not," Mrs. Bloss remarked. "By the by, somebody brought a letter for you. I laid it on the table so you might see it. Did you find it when you came in?"

This meant, "Now it is my turn." Mr. Bloss knew that as well as if it had been said in plain words. "There it is," he said, drawing it forth from his pocket all crumpled up.

"Who is it from?" his wife inquired as she smoothed it out. "Oh indeed, Mr. Denning!"

Mrs. Bloss read it twice before she said a word. "Why, what on earth——" she ejaculated at last. "Looks as if you'd let him know all about it."

"I told him my opinion," said Mr. Bloss. "And I don't doubt but what he felt put out at being publicly rebuked. But that was his look out. I am bound to rebuke wrong-doing wherever I see it; and if there's a thing I detest more than another, it is when a man does not act on the square towards his fellow man. I think I could stand almost anything and hold my tongue; but not that."

Oh, Bloss, Bloss, by what lie like to that of Ananias didst thou gain an entrance into the ministry that thou degradest! For thou didst pretend to be divinely called, whereas the only call was that of thy miserable stomach. Thus didst thou enter into the priest's office so thou mightest eat a piece of bread. Was that acting squarely, Bloss, to thy fellow man?

"No meanness for me: fair and square is my motto," quoth Mr. Bloss.

"Well, that is a most abject letter, don't you think?"

"H—m. Abject? I don't know that I'd call it precisely abject. I dare say he did not like being publicly rebuked by one young enough to be his son. But he brought it on himself. If he or any other episcopal minister wants to deliver a discourse, let him say so, and present his credentials in a proper manner."

"And to think you loaned him a surplice! But it was not your last clean one," said Mrs. Bloss. "It was the one you wore that Sunday when it rained.—Well, supper's ready."

So Mr. Bloss went in and ate largely of hot waffles spread with butter and sprinkled with powdered cinnamon; and ham and pickles; and drank abundantly of the tea known in that region as "English breakfast."

And when he went to bed he dreamed a horrible dream. He dreamed that he was St. George, and that the dragon had refused to consider himself vanquished, and was sitting on his chest instead. And he threw out his arms with such energy that Mrs. Bloss screamed. And next morning when she went to look in the glass she beheld her nose black and blue, and she got mad and told her reverend husband that he should not have waffles again for supper.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EX-CURATE.

While Mr. Bloss was pluming himself in the belief that he had magnified his office in the most signal manner, he was storing up for himself an amount of ill-will of which he was little aware. Among the bystanders who had witnessed the attack on Mr. Denning were men who, though belonging to other religious communities, felt strongly the unjustifiable nature of the attack. But if even the outsiders were stirred up, how were the souls of the English Churchmen wrung within them! Added to indignation on behalf of Mr. Denning, each one felt what an occasion for contemptuous laughter this was to any member of another community who had witnessed the attack made by one clergyman on another. That Mr. Bloss was an Englishman by birth only made them feel more mortified; for many of the outsiders, knowing this, were in the habit of calling him "the English clergyman." Whereas he was not an English clergyman in any sense whatever. And, having become at his earliest opportunity, a citizen of the United States, he was not now even an Englishman. Colonel Haverstock, as one of the oldest residents, was asked

whether Mr. Bloss could not be requested to resign. The Colonel deprecated the putting of any such question. What would become of them all, he asked, if they began quarrelling at this early day? Then the question was asked of Major Forepaw, and the Major informed the inquirers that members of the Episcopal Church had no power either to elect or dismiss a minister: and Bloss was not likely to accede to a mere request.

"There's only one way the congregation can act," said he with a twinkle of his eye, and a slight muscular movement of the eyelid opposite to the cheek that held his quid. "I've known it tried successfully, but seems hardly worth while in this case."

Nevertheless, what was it? they asked.

"Wal, you can starve him out," said the Major.

There were murmurs of disgust. Nobody wished to do anything mean, they said. Because Mr. Bloss had acted in an ungentlemanly way, there was no reason why they should follow suit. Could not the vestry act?

"Yes, the vestry can act, I believe, but I guess the vestry ain't going to, in this instance," said the Major, putting his right foot upon his desk and stretching himself to his fullest extent.

"You see," said the Major, when he had shrunk back to his normal length—an inch or so beyond six feet—"You see, Bloss is a new hand at the trade. Sorter tenderfoot, as they say down in Colorado. Well, it's live and learn, I s'pose, in the ministry like in any other trade. I reckon Bloss ain't much folks anyway, but you might have a worse."

"We could hardly have one who was less of a

gentleman," said Harry Tregellas, who was one of the malcontents.

"Wal, sir," said the Major, "I wouldn't be sure of that. And then, gentlemen, after all, you've got to remember that if you have a cheap article you pay a cheap price. Let the vestry be empowered to say to the bishop, 'We offer a thousand dollars salary,' and the bishop will name a minister that's worth that salary. So far, you see you have the game in your own hands, gentlemen."

But there were murmurs that Mr. Bloss was not worth the salary he got: some went so far as to say he was not worth his salt.

"Wal," said the Major, "I've told you your remedy, gentlemen.—Going? What's your hurry? Wal, good-day."

When his visitors were gone, he bethought himself that in the course of his experience he had not met with any bigger fool than Bloss. Nevertheless, because of his being churchwarden, not because of his special love to Bloss, he would give him a hint to moderate his aggressiveness. Probably he would be too big a fool to take the hint. The Major thought he might bet safely on that; and had he made a bet with any one he would have won it; for Mr. Bloss refused to be warned as to his aggressiveness, and refused to confess that he had been in any way wrong in this last instance.

"You may say what you like," he persisted, "but the pulpit is mine, so far. Mr. Denning is no pastor of a congregation; he's just an individual. And if I rebuked him publicly, I maintain that I had a right so to do. when he was usurping my privileges publicly."

"But see here, Bloss," said the Major, "you say he preached a sermon. Wal, those who were present say one and all that 'twas no sermon. To begin with, it was not long enough; and then again, it had no text. Now a sermon ain't a sermon unless it's got a text."

"Ah," said Mr. Bloss, "that was just his meanness. Just a quibble, sir; just a quibble."

"Wal, I do admire!" said the Major. But what he was admiring was the pigheadedness of Mr. Bloss.

"Wal, suit yourself," he said. "You ought to know as well as I do that in the long run you get more out of folks by keeping them in a good temper, than by making them mad at every turn. Suppose they all conclude to stop away from church and stop the supplies as well, where would you be?"

Mr. Bloss replied stoutly that there were other places in the vineyard besides Harmonia. And the Major went away, feeling that Bloss's mulishness was beyond the mulishness of any ordinary mule he had ever encountered in his travels.

Trelease had been one of those who had witnessed the attack made by Mr. Bloss on Mr. Denning. All the pain and shame felt by the Englishmen who had been present were intensified in his case. Even Harry Tregellas who had heard all, and who had felt as if he unwittingly had been the instrument in bringing such an insult on Mr. Denning, did not feel such pain and shame as did Trelease.

It has been said already that Trelease had given up his curacy in England mainly because of doubts as to the soundness of the doctrine of the Church on Baptismal Regeneration. He had not felt a doubt when he took

Orders; it was afterwards, it was when his hand was already put to the plough that he began to ask himself, What if this thing were a delusion? "Whoso has never doubted, has never thought," says the poet: unlucky it was for Trelease's peace of mind that the thinking process could not have begun earlier. He might then have waited; he might have had a chance of satisfying himself; or, if he could not be satisfied, he might have chosen some other walk in life. It happened that the christenings in the parish he served fell most frequently to his lot; it does generally happen so in the case of young curates. Time after time, as Trelease administered the rite, he endured such mental agony that it seemed to him better that he should go and break stones on the road, rather than remain in the Church doubting the Twenty-seventh Article. It was impossible to say the words of the office as though he believed them not. He dared not do that. And some of the words he did believe thoroughly. If only he could have eliminated those words, those phrases to which he felt himself unable to adhere! His rector, a dignitary of the Church, had treated his modestly expressed doubts as a temptation of the devil. Now Trelease could not stifle his doubts because of this diagnosis. There they were, and there they remained. And there was another thing which troubled him: the want of strict adherence by the superior clergy to what he conceived to be the Scriptural standard of living. And then he began to ask himself, What was the worth of Holy Orders, what even was the Apostolical succession worth, if those on whom episcopal hands had been laid were still of the world, worldly? One doubt opens the door to another. He began to ask

himself whether consecration was necessary. He soon went on to ask himself whether consecration was right Should not a man thinking himself called to preach the Gospel go and preach, instead of waiting to pass through a course prescribed by a university and be ordained? Surely he himself must know best whether or no he had a real vocation. This had been the state of his mind when there seemed to open a loophole of escape to a place of refuge, where at least he might pause and think and have bread to eat meanwhile. And then, as though he were not troubled enough in mind already, his rector's daughter laughed his tale of love to scorn.

In England, if a man chooses a calling in life, be it secular or religious, he is almost expected to remain in it. The man who has not made up his mind, who is constantly tying and untying, adding to, and taking from, his bundle of opinions, is not the man desired by rectors as a curate; nor would his *status* of ex-curate make him more acceptable to men of business as a junior partner, or even as a clerk. Amongst Americans it is so common a thing for a man to try three or four different trades and professions before he settles to one, that the fact of his having done so is no disadvantage to him, but rather the contrary; because it shows a quality of adaptiveness which they value.

So here was Trelease throwing up his curacy and contemplating life as a farmer: while on the other hand Bloss, having failed to get his bread as a tiller of the soil, had entered the Church and was getting it there: and a good deal more than dry bread, in spite of his grumbling. And to Americans in general it seemed that Mr. Bloss had done a smart thing.

Perhaps, if it had fallen to the lot of Trelease a few months before to hear such a discourse on baptism as that delivered by Mr. Denning, he had never thrown up his curacy, never contemplated leaving the Church of England. He had, like Mr. Bloss, been wont to despise learning; "mere carnal learning," he had been prone to call it. He, too, had thought much about preaching the "pure" gospel. But having much more learning, and a great deal more common-sense than Mr. Bloss, he did not despise learning in its proper place. While he sat listening to Mr. Denning on the day of the christening, he felt himself a poor, shallow, ignorant fool, who had missed seeing his privileges; who had had no mental grasp by which to apprehend the greatness of things. How, he asked himself, could he have dared write, much more preach, sermons. He had tried to make them evangelical, but what miserable performances they were! As he listened he began to feel that a man who sets up for a teacher cannot possess too much learning. He was keenly aware what a vast difference there would have been in his discourse, had he been required to produce one on this most ancient of the Christian sacraments. The array of facts set forth by Mr. Denning was not precisely new to him. If his intellect was not wonderful in precocity or in extent, yet he was no ignoramus. But it would never have occurred to him to quote any one of the Fathers,—indeed he had a notion that they were just as well kept out of sermons; he would not even have quoted a text from the Apocrypha; still less would it have occurred to him to draw a parallel between the great baptizings in the earliest days of the Church, at Ænon, at Jerusalem, in the Jordan, and that

other great baptizing by Augustine and his forty monks in the river Swale.

Trelease had supposed when first he saw Mr. Denning that he might be a doubter like himself;—what else should bring an elderly clergyman of the Church of England to a place like Harmonia? When he was told that Mr. Denning belonged to that fossil section known as High and Dry, he shrank back from the slight overtures Mr. Denning made towards his acquaintance; such as he made to all newcomers, leaving the newcomers to follow them up or not as seemed good to them. Trelease knew that some belonging to the High and Dry party considered it a sin not to be pardoned that a man—above all an ordained priest—should doubt such a doctrine as that set forth in the Twenty-seventh Article. Miserable as his doubts made him, he could not feel that he had committed an unpardonable sin. Counsel he would have been most glad of, but he had not so far met with any counsellor. So he had been all this time in Harmonia, and had not yet got beyond a bowing acquaintance with Mr. Denning.

Now of all hearers of Mr. Denning's address, Trelease had appreciated it the most, and was longing, yet hardly venturing, to say a word of thanks to him, when he happened to witness the attack made on him by Mr. Bloss.

When he heard that—so loud and blustering and vulgar—and heard the soft answer of the other—his first impulse was to knock Mr. Bloss down. His right arm went up before he was aware of it; but the self-restraint of a gentleman came to his aid, as it came to the aid of one or two other Englishmen. As it has been related, the crowd melted away, and Mr. Bloss was left

standing, having had as he believed the best of the battle.

Then Trelease's shyness vanished. A few words were said by Harry and one or two who dropped in simultaneously at Dr. Bontecoe's house—expressions of surprise and wrath and disgust—and Trelease escaped from the disturbed coterie, for it seemed to him that his most pressing duty was to go and thank Mr. Denning for the words which had been such a help to him.

He found Mr. Denning sitting apparently idle in his arm-chair, with his books beside him. When Trelease entered he was making some sad reflections on himself. He had acted on what he had felt at the moment to be an innocent impulse, and behold! there had ensued a stirring up of strife. It did not matter to him that Mr. Bloss was unreasonable, or that his attack was unjustifiable. There the fact was: he had spoken, and strife was the consequence.

Trelease who, though a gentleman, was anything rather than a man of the world, began a timid and lame apology for not having come before. "But," he continued, "I felt I must come now, even at the risk of intruding, to thank you for what you said to us in church."

Mr. Denning smiled sadly. "I was just wishing I had held my tongue," he said.

"Oh," cried Trelease, "pray do not say that!"

"It is better to refrain even from good words if they stir up strife."

"I know what you mean," said Trelease blushing. "One would think the man had taken leave of his senses. I believe my friend Tregellas was within an ace of knocking him down. I know I was."

"That would not have mended matters."

"Of course not! That was the first prompting of the old Adam. Of course it was better to keep quiet. But if you knew how angry every one is!—I left a lot of fellows talking, just now."

"I am sorry,—sorry. I do not wish a word said. I wish it all to be forgotten," said Mr. Denning. "If it would not be too much to ask you, would you say that I wish it all to be forgotten? A mere angry word, due to a misconception,—what is it? No wise man would allow himself to be disturbed by such a thing." And yet in spite of these wise and temperate words Mr. Denning looked troubled, and the veins in his forehead swelled as if there were a sudden rush of blood to his head.

"I can only be sorry I said a single word," he added, rubbing his head with his handkerchief.

"Well," said Trelease, "I can assure you, sir, that I would not have missed hearing what you said for any earthly consideration. Every one was glad; more than glad: thankful would be the right word. As for me, I could have listened for hours. And—we who were talking about it afterwards, we felt so proud of being Englishmen!—We agreed that our nationality and our Church never before seemed to us so closely bound up together. You made it all so clear. You showed us what a wonderful heritage God had given to His Englishmen. Ah it was grand—grand," Trelease cried with enthusiasm. Then stopping himself and falling back into his usual shy manner,—"I know I express myself very badly. I wish I could make you understand what I felt."

"I think I understand," said Mr. Denning. He had

thought many a time that he had outlived the being moved by either the praise or the blame of men. But he had not. This young man's words were pleasant, and as he listened he felt himself soothed and comforted. He began to think that it was well perhaps, to have spoken those words, if they had fallen on good ground; even though strife had been stirred up.

"I have thought a good deal on that subject in some of its bearings," Trelease said. "Not in all, I must confess, for had I done so, your address would not have been such a delightful surprise to me."

"May I ask, if it is not an impertinent question, whether you belong to the Church of England?"

"Surely!" cried Trelease. "I was ordained two years ago. I gave up my curacy because I was uneasy." He stopped, but Mr. Denning's face seemed to encourage him to go on. "I had the most distressing doubts."

"Ah, so you have made acquaintance with Giant Despair and his crabtree cudgel? So have I."

This encouraged Trelease still more. "Then," he said timidly, "you do not think that doubt necessarily proceeds from the Evil One?"

"Not necessarily. And supposing in some cases it does, we know that it is only permitted to try the temper of our faith."

"I am so glad to hear you say that!" cried Trelease.

"Pray understand, I am not laying down the law. I merely say to you what I have found comforting to myself at certain times; under certain circumstances, which I trust will never be yours."

"So you too have had doubts," Trelease ventured to say.

"I may say, I have them. They matter to none but myself; they are wholly between me and my Maker. But, such as they are, they have kept me out of the pulpit for twenty years."

"Twenty years!" cried Trelease. "And can they not be solved? I doubted for twelve months before I gave up my curacy, and those months were almost more than I could endure. I have been more than once on the point of leaving the Church altogether."

"And supposing you had thrown off your allegiance to the National Church, where would you have gone? Did you think of that?" Mr. Denning asked.

"That was just what stopped me. Where indeed?"

"Where indeed!" echoed Mr. Denning.

Trelease rose, begging pardon for having taken up so much of Mr. Denning's time.

"Nay, nay, I have been glad to see you," said he. "And remember this, wherever the doubts come from, or whatever they may be, we have the same key that Christian had. We have the key called Promise."

"Yes," Trelease assented. Yet it seemed as if he had not known it before. What new truth was this man revealing to him?

"That key will unlock all the doors of Doubting Castle, as you remember. But the great gate is very hard to open. It creaks and groans. You must wait."

"Not for twenty years, I hope," said Trelease.

"I hope not. I hope not. You are so young. Life must seem to promise so much to you. Let us hope you will win through the great gate before long."

Trelease made his adieux, begging to be allowed to

come again. He did not go home at once, but walked up and down in the woods communing with himself.

Mr. Denning for his part sat thinking of Trelease. "He is so young; so much younger than his years. He must be six or seven and twenty. And he talks of distressing doubts! What can his be compared to mine? Yet I have endured mine for twenty years, and I may go on for another decade. Well, I can wait. I am old and tough now. And the solution cannot be so very long in coming. What is ten years?"

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO IS SYLVIA?

A FEW cloudy days, a few rainy days, and already winter was gone, and the wild geese were winging their way to the north, and the turtle dove was cooing among the pines. Yet a few days more, and the swamp willows were golden, and the maple buds scarlet-tipped. The indigo birds and the humming birds were back from Florida, and a golden oriole had begun to build its nest at the end of a beech tree branch which waved in sight of Edith's window.

With the spring days came new settlers; and there was one who excited much curiosity among the Harmonia people, because when they asked the question, "What made her come to Harmonia?" they could get no proper answer to it.

She lived with a companion who went about with her everywhere. She went to Saratoga or the White Mountains or Newport in the summer, and to Florida in the winter. She was a graduate of New Athens, and a doctor of medicine. She was young and beautiful, and she was a millionaire. She was disgusted with the hollowness of society, and she had come to make her

home among the unsophisticated Harmonia people. Lastly, her name was Sylvia Luttrell, and she was a New Englander.

It was Mrs. Macfarlane who told Edith all this. The Major had told her husband; and of course the Major knew. It would be a good thing for Harmonia if she would take a fancy to the place and stay, and give parties. But the trouble with rich people, Mrs. Macfarlane said, was that they wanted to go around so much. As likely as not, as soon as Miss Luttrell had got things nicely fixed, and every one had begun to get acquainted, she and her companion Miss Priest would be off to the White Mountains and they would see no more of them.

Many heads were turned to look at Miss Luttrell when she came to church on the Sunday following her arrival. There was not a dissentient vote as to her prettiness. She had delicate features, a delicate complexion, and a great deal of light brown hair, which grew on her head, though there were doubts expressed of its authenticity. She wore a Worth costume, and she had a lovely painted fan which she waved gently while Mr. Bloss delivered his usual platitudes. As she had been shown to a seat near the front, she could not see much of her neighbours, but she could see the rector and the rector's wife and the rector's little boy, and she quickly made up her mind that Mrs. Bloss was anæmic and Mr. Bloss was bilious, and the little boy as ill-favoured a little boy as might be expected. Nevertheless, she would be civil to them all; she intended to be civil and kind to everybody. One could not expect to meet with a fifty thousand dollar preacher in a little two-cent pioneer

place like Harmonia. As she was going to be civil to everybody she would begin by calling at the rectory. It was the custom for a new comer to wait till the residents called; but she did not see what was the good of being rich if one could not make customs for one's self. So on the Monday afternoon she called on Mrs. Bloss.

As it was the afternoon for the English mail, a great many of the residents had the opportunity of admiring Miss Luttrell's smart turn out while she paid her visit. Twenty minutes elapsed, and then she was seen to cross the street to Major Forepaw's office and return to the rectory with the Major. Then there was an adjournment to the churchyard, and Major Forepaw took a foot rule out of his pocket and measured off a piece of ground next the fence, and Miss Luttrell took the foot rule after him and verified his measurements. There was a drawing forth of pocket-books and making of notes; after which Miss Luttrell, attended to the gate by both Mr. and Mrs. Bloss, drove away to make more calls, first however stopping to give an order at the grocery.

That evening the grocer's boy delivered at the rectory a barrel of flour, a keg of sugar, a bag of coffee, and various other substantial housekeeping necessaries. The Major, happening to stroll in, had seen the post-master packing up the various articles, and with the *naïf* curiosity of the frequenter of a country store, asked point blank for whom they were destined.

"Wish we could have a few more Yankee ladies here, if this one is a sample," he said, when the postmaster had informed him that the whole was a present to the rectory from Miss Luttrell. The postmaster agreed, adding that with half a dozen such as she, there

would be no trouble about guaranteeing the minister's salary.

"That's a fact," the Major assented. "I like to see money circulated. If I'd got the dollars, I'd sling 'em around, you bet I would. I admired when she came in to my office a while ago to speak about a shed to shelter the horses. 'To shelter the horses,' said she," the Major repeated. And the postmaster sat upon the counter and laughed. The Major continued:—

"'Why don't you have a proper shed,' says she, 'for them to stand under, so they may be out of the weather? Couldn't say my prayers,' says she, 'for thinking of those poor horses just hitched up anyhow. No money? Then I'll put up the shed and pay for it myself.' And I'm to get the lumber and see about it right away. Then at the last Mis' Bloss comes with a pitiful tale about the study, and the summer sun pouring in an' givin' the rector the headache. Mis' Bloss suttenly is not the woman to go without a thing for want of asking. So I must get that done, and send in the bill to Miss Luttrell. And she will be so glad to do any little thing to promote the rector's comfort. I reckon Mis' Bloss will be able to tell of a good many ways in which the rector's comfort may be promoted. But that is not my look out. It will all bring money into Harmonia."

Sylvia confided to her companion, Miss Priest, that, though she had gone not expecting much, still she had been disappointed in the rectory people. She wanted to know why anæmia and dyspepsia should be the rule in ministers' households. There must be a cause for it; and if there was a cause there must be a cure. She

was disappointed; at the same time she felt she had no right to be disappointed. The rectory was as dismal a little place as she had ever been in, and she did not see how the rector was to preach the Gospel of glad tidings successfully if he was in constant discomfort. When she was studying for her examinations she always chose the easiest chair and the cosiest room to study in. The rector had shown her his study, and what a wretched little room it was! She could not see it and hear his complaints about it, and his wife's complaints, without promising to do something to improve it.

Miss Priest made a sound of disapproval. She had reached the age when a woman is supposed to have got beyond every illusion, and she believed that her mission now was to keep Sylvia Luttrell, whom she had known from her babyhood and who had hardly a relative, but only a great deal of money, from being preyed upon and eaten out of house and home by all sorts of adventurers.

"I'd like to know," said Miss Priest, "what kind of a study Saint Paul had to write his epistles in. I guess there was not much cosiness in it."

"Saint Paul was an old bachelor who did not care for being comfortable."

"I differ from you there. I think he did care, ever so much. See how he complains of all he had to go through."

"Well," said Sylvia, "people did not have comforts in those days. But that is no reason why the rector should not have a few comforts if I can supply them. He's a dyspeptic, and dyspeptics are always a complaining lot. If a man uses up his nervous energy in

complaining, he won't have enough left to teach his flock the way to heaven. That's clear."

"It is clear to you, at any rate," said Miss Priest. And she made up her mind to keep an eye on the rector and his wife.

Sylvia had a scheme in her head with regard to Harmonia, which she soon confided to Miss Priest. She had made the acquaintance by this time of every resident in Harmonia. Some had called upon her, and she had made the first call on a good many. Life was not long enough, she said, to wait and see whether one's neighbours are going to be neighbourly or not. Somebody must begin, and if people didn't like her looks they needn't return her call.

"They are good people, on the whole," she said to Miss Priest. "But they are all in a rut. Some are down ever so deep, already; and some are just sinking gradually. I see exactly how it is, and I am convinced that my mission is to drag them out of this rut."

"One at a time, I hope," said Miss Priest.

"No; all together. You and I—you must help about the decorations and the housekeeping part—you and I might get up something like Margaret Fuller's conversation parties. There must be some women here who have minds," she continued doubtfully. "At least we will hope so. We shall see. Perhaps in time we might work up to something like *Sorosis*. Even *Sorosis* had a beginning."

"*Sorosis!*" said Miss Priest. "You are always above everybody's head, Sylvy. As if women who are bothered all day with their babies and husbands and housekeeping, would ever want to write poetry or essays!"

Sylvia however kept to her idea. She sent out her invitations, and called besides on a good many people to explain what kind of parties she wished her parties to be. She tried to impress upon everybody that no woman was to be made to speak a word unless she pleased; but that she would feel it a favour if any woman who had something to say, would get up and say it. That was the only way, she thought, of getting out of the rut.

The party came off, and Sylvia saw that every one felt it to be a success. There was plenty to eat and drink, there were hothouse flowers in profusion, there was a hostess in a gown by Worth; everything that money could bring was there. There was cheerfulness, there was even liveliness. But Sylvia groaned in spirit when she thought afterwards of the conversation! Mrs. Macfarlane had talked of fashions, Mrs. Macgregor of housekeeping, Mrs. Bloss of *clairvoyance* and faith cures and quack remedies. And Mrs. Tregellas—of whom she had hoped better things—Mrs. Tregellas had talked of her baby! It was discouraging; but Sylvia was resolved not to be daunted. To make the people wish to come again was, after all, the first step. And she had already found out some things about the Harmonia people which made them interesting to her. She had found out Raine's devotion to Mary Ellacombe. And she had found out, too, that the rector and his wife were not very popular; and that Mr. Garlick was a man with tendencies to science, which ought to be encouraged.

It had not been without misgiving that Mrs. Ellacombe accepted Miss Luttrell's invitation. She consulted Mrs. Tregellas as to what she had better do,

and Mrs. Tregellas suggested that it would be impossible to keep Mary shut up permanently because the wrong man happened to fall in love with her. So they went: Mary being bidden by her mother to keep close to her; and above all things to "keep herself to herself," if by any mischance Mr. Raine should ask her to stroll about, or should pretend to wish to show her something. Mary promised, but the promise made her more shy than ever. Her face glowed when Raine came up to speak to her, and in the long, soft pressure of his hand, her hand lay passive.

If Miss Priest had been ready to form a bad opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Bloss from what she heard of them from Sylvia, her bad opinion was but confirmed by their behaviour at Sylvia's party. Sylvia had suggested to Miss Priest that when the entertainment was over, a basket could be filled with the sweet things which had not been touched, and put quietly into Mrs. Bloss's buggy. And Miss Priest had thought this quite reasonable, and had prepared a basket herself.

But the first time would be the last, as she told Sylvia after every one was gone.

"I'm willing to do 'most anything to oblige you, Sylvy," she said. "And if 'twas sitting up at night, as I've done for you before now, I'd do it, and gladly. But when a woman goes around with a basket under her buggy seat, and tells you to put the cake and the jelly in, just so; and won't have 'em wrapped up because she can't be bothered sending napkins back, and never so much as a thank ye when all's done, why then, Sylvy, I say that woman is a tramp. And that husband of hers is not much better."

Sylvia, seeing how devoted Raine was to Mary, resolved that the two should have opportunities of meeting at her house. She had told Mary that she must come again; but to make sure she wrote a note to Mrs. Ellacombe, reminding her that she and Mary would be expected on Thursday.

"I suppose Miss Luttrell's note must be answered," Mary said, as she and her mother sat at work on the Monday afternoon. This was a feeler; for Mrs. Ellacombe had as yet only said she did not know whether they would go or not. Mary thought that perhaps they ought not to go: but she could not help wishing they might be going.

"It is time it should be answered," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "You had better say we are sorry, and we can't come. You ought to know how to write a proper note, Mary."

"Shall we go—next time?" asked Mary.

"I don't know about next time."

"She said she wanted us to come every week."

"Oh, that would never do," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "It is all very well for her. She has plenty of money, and she has nothing else to do except have parties. But for plain people like us it would never do."

"Then are we never to go any more?" said Mary with a wistful look.

"I don't say, never. Never is a long day. But we shall not go this time. Why, Mary, what would father say at your wanting to go to a tea party every week?"

"I don't know that I'd care to go quite every week," said Mary. And then there was a little sigh; stifled, it is true, but not so stifled that Mrs. Ellacombe could

not hear it. She did hear it, and drew her own conclusions.

"She thinks Mr. Raine will be there, that's what it is. And I wish Mr. Raine was to Jericho." She did not wish him any evil: but oh! if something or somebody would only take him out of her child's way! To Jericho or some other harmless place.

The day before Miss Luttrell's social gathering Mrs. Ellacombe and her daughter drove into Harmonia to get their letters, and at the post office met Raine and young Huish. Raine was by the side of the buggy instantly, with his hat off and his sweetest smile. Huish was but little behindhand, for he felt it a feather in his cap to be seen on apparently friendly terms with the prettiest girl in Harmonia.

Mrs. Ellacombe was obliged to get down to speak to the postmaster, and she did so without misgiving. There were two of the young men, and the presence of the one would prevent any attempt at love-making by the other. And she would only stay in the store a moment.

She only did remain a moment: and during that moment Raine said to Mary:—

"Are you going to the tea-fight to-morrow?"

"Miss Luttrell's tea party, you mean?" said Mary.

"Yes. Everybody is going."

"They say she's awfully rich," put in Huish, who was standing on the other side of the buggy. "The postmaster told me that the old lady who lives with her was in there ordering things that he had to get specially from Cincinnati. And I believe she gets some of her things from New York."

"I dare say it will be very pleasant," said Mary. "I do wish we were going."

"Not going? Oh, you must go, Miss Ellacombe," cried Huish.

Under cover of Huish's voice Raine stooped forward and said, "If you are not going, I shall not go, either."

Mary blushed crimson. "But why not?"

Their eyes met for an instant. She felt as she had never felt before beneath his gaze. She knew she was turning red, and then redder, and redder still. She knew she must be the colour of a peony. And all the people in the street would see her, and stop and stare and wonder!

"I am sure Miss Luttrell will expect you," she said, hardly knowing what to say.

He smiled. "I will go if you will go."

Huish added, with the most benevolent intentions,—"It will be awfully slow for some of us if you don't go, Miss Ellacombe."

Mary felt herself blushing again. How dared this young man say such a thing! Could he imagine there was anything between her and Mr. Raine? For one moment she felt glad she was not going. It would be dreadful indeed if a chattering young man like Mr. Huish should begin talking.

"I am quite sure we are not going," she said, with an assumption of coldness that was a very fair copy of her friend Edith's manner.

Mrs. Ellacombe came bustling out of the store, and one young man flew to the horse's head, and the other gave her his hand to help her into the buggy. She

thanked them both and drove off, glad that she had not been more than just that minute. "A very pretty spoken young man is Mr. Huish," she remarked, and Mary did not say nay.

Mrs. Ellacombe was relieved to see that, after all, Mary did not seem to regret the forbidden gaiety. She did not even beg that they might go to the next party Miss Luttrell gave. And on the day itself, when, had they been going, Mary would have been preparing the dresses to be worn by herself and her mother, she went about her daily work as usual, and after dinner sat down to her despised piano and played some of her old school-girl tunes. The afternoon wore on, and before tea-time her spirits seemed to flag a little. "Poor child," was Mrs. Ellacombe's thought, "'tis natural she should wish to be gay; and such quiet gaiety, too: no dancing nor anything worldly. 'Tis hard she should be kept out of it." How could she make it up to her child for having kept her away from the party? Mary had not grumbled and complained as some girls would have done. Should she give her a new dress? But alas! a new dress would make her thoughts run on more parties.

Mary had walked out to meet her father, as she often did, and the tea waiter was being carried into the dining room, when Mrs. Ellacombe heard herself called, and went to the door in haste. "Mother," cried Mary, her cheeks all aglow with running, "they are both here. I saw them coming with father, and I ran back to tell you."

"They! Who's they?" said Mrs. Ellacombe, putting up her hand instinctively to feel if her cap was straight.

"Mr. Huish—and Mr. Raine," panted Mary.

"Why, I thought they were going to Miss Luttrell's," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

"Well, they will be here in a minute. Shall I put out the best tea-set, mother? Mr. Huish hasn't been here before."

"N—o," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "Your father hates to be kept waiting for his tea. There's the cake, and you might take out a pot of jam."

Mary went to the cupboard and chose a pot of damson. Damson she remembered was what "he" had said he liked best. And it will be evident to the dullest mind that, if Mary had got so far as to call Mr. Raine "he" in her thoughts, in connection with proclivities to jam, Mrs. Ellacombe might as well have taken her to Miss Luttrell's tea party, as kept her at home.

"We thought a stroll down here would be pleasanter than going to that tea-fight," Raine said as he shook hands. "And my friend Huish wished to ask Mr. Ellacombe's advice on one or two points, and so——"

Mrs. Ellacombe said stiffly that she was glad to see them. What should the two have come for? she asked herself. She did not believe a word about young Huish wanting advice. She had always heard him spoken of as a self-satisfied young man who was likely to pay dearly sooner or later for his presumption in striking out new methods of his own in farming. Their coming was just a contrivance of Mr. Raine's. The friend was to talk to her, while he talked to Mary.

But once put on her guard, Mrs. Ellacombe proved more vigilant than the most vigilant Spanish duenna.

The young men proposed a walk. It was a pleasant evening, and perhaps they might see some fireflies. Mrs. Ellacombe scouted the idea. There would be no fireflies for the next six weeks, she said. They could take a stroll with Mr. Ellacombe, but the air was too damp for her and Mary. It must be dull for gentlemen to sit still all the evening, and they wanted no doubt to stretch their legs.

The two young men made their adieux quite early, as might have been expected. Not a word, not a whisper, could Raine get with Mary. "Don't ask me to go there again," said Huish. "I did my best, but that old woman has eyes in the back of her head, and it was no go."

"It was 'no go' with a vengeance as far as I was concerned," said Raine, "I couldn't get in a word."

"And it was as dull as ditchwater—beastly dull," said Huish. "And if I had gone to Miss Luttrell's I'd have had a chance of speaking a word to Kate."

Let it be said here, that Huish had had very little chance of following up his idea with regard to Kate Haverstock. Nothing was farther from Mrs. Haverstock's mind than to invite young men to the house. Until she could meet with a regenerate young man, she thought the fewer Kate saw the better. She had before her eyes the fearful consequences of a girl having fallen in love with, and married, an unregenerate young man. Whether a young man such as she dreamt of would be likely to fall in love with the unregenerate Kate was a side of the question she had never studied.

The visit of the two young men to Mrs. Ellacombe's

did make a slight difference to Mary. She knew well —though not a single word was said—why Raine had brought his friend Huish with him. He thought it would give him an opportunity for some love whispering. And because that opportunity was lost, through her mother's vigilance, Mary's heart was all the more defenceless, perhaps, against future love whisperings. It was no use, of course. It could never come to anything; but it was hard the poor fellow could not say one word, if he really—really, were so fond of her.

And what was Mrs. Ellacombe to say, when Miss Luttrell herself came and begged for Mary to come next time? She took refuge in pretended business at home, and then Miss Luttrell offered to send for Mary, and have her sent back. Mrs. Ellacombe stood out as long as she could. She did not like letting her daughter go out without her, she said; and there was much to do, and so forth. And Miss Luttrell declared that it was the first duty of a housekeeper not to wear herself out with housekeeping; and that these social gatherings were instituted on purpose to prevent that. Mrs. Ellacombe was obliged to give in, or else be thought unfriendly, and she could not bear that. So that Raine had the happiness, one sunny Thursday afternoon, of having Mary as his partner in a game of croquet; during which he contrived to repeat his tale of love.

Sylvia, who was walking with Edith, said it amused her to see boys and girls making love. Edith remarked that she was not much more than a girl herself. And indeed she was looking very young and very charming in a pale blue cashmere tea-gown.

"I am not very old," said Sylvia with her most grandmotherly air, "but I am quite beyond all that. Is there not a rose called *Rosa Devoniensis?* I shall call Mary the *Rosa Devoniensis*. Do you observe, Mrs. Tregellas, that Mary appears interested."

"I don't think there is anything in it," said Edith; and she spoke as if she were vexed.

"Of course I may be mistaken," said Sylvia, wondering why Mrs. Tregellas should be vexed.

Edith was thinking of the proverb about "constant dropping." Mary did look interested; too much interested. "If the girl gives way at last, and falls in love with the young man," she thought, "it will only make a wretched complication, and it will neither give him an income nor make him more desirable in other ways."

They took a turn up and down, and again stopped to watch the croquet players. Sylvia smiled and held her fan before her face. "It really is too amusing," she said. "Why does one always want to laugh at lovers? They look absurd when they are happy, and doubly absurd when they are miserable."

"Wait till you have been in love yourself, Miss Luttrell," said Edith. But she could not forbear smiling.

"I intend to wait, I assure you," said Sylvia. "Now why does Mr. Trelease look so woebegone?"

"I am sure it is not worth while," said Edith. "Why falling in love must be in the air, like an epidemic. Just because that absurd little fellow, Mr. Huish, is Kate Haverstock's partner. He is surely not going to fall in love with Kate. He has nothing to marry on, either."

"It is springtime, you know," laughed Sylvia. "They

can't help it, I must manage to get up another game for his sake when this one is over."

"I dare say they would like it. I don't know what the fathers and mothers would say."

"I don't think the fathers and mothers have much to say, here," said Sylvia. "I do not know how it may be in your country."

Mrs. Tregellas laughed and blushed a little. "I suppose love laughs at locksmiths sometimes, in every country. I know I defied my guardians,—a couple of maiden aunts. I was dreadfully afraid, but I did defy them."

Sylvia said she would like to hear all about it; it must be so interesting. Edith however refused to enter into the particulars. "It was an experiment," she said, "and it succeeded, and I have my husband and my baby. But every woman's experiment does not succeed. We only have to look round to see that."

This afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Bloss had not come, and nobody seemed to miss them. Mr. Denning had come early, and had been given the most comfortable chair in the house. Here he sat contentedly and talked to Mr. Garlick; and gradually people gathered round him and became an audience to a gentle monologue: touching first on one topic and then on another; and lastly on the translation he was making of the *Ramayana*. Sylvia was quite sorry when he broke off and hoped he had not been boring everybody. She had been delighted herself and thought every one else must have been so too.

"He ought to give a lecture about that," she said to Mr. Garlick. "This is exactly the sort of thing I wanted."

Mr. Garlick smiled at her eagerness. "I fear he would not be persuaded, even by you. There is nothing of the professional lecturer about him, though I have now and then heard him deliver what was in fact a most delightful lecture, to a select audience consisting of Dr. Bontecoe, Trelease, and myself."

Sylvia considered. "But why should he object to deliver a lecture? If I had so much to say, I should like to say it. Perhaps he would do it if he had an audience of men only. Is it that he considers women too foolish?" And Sylvia drew herself up and looked superb.

"I am certain he does not consider *you* too foolish."

Sylvia put the compliment aside. "Never mind about *me*. If we women have the fault of making every question a personal one, it is a fault distinctly owing to the foolish speeches we are in the habit of hearing from men."

"I will not make any more foolish speeches if I can help it," said Mr. Garlick with a twinkle of fun in his eye.

"Please, don't. I like you ever so much better when you don't make speeches—of that sort. That is all very well for boys and girls," said Sylvia, waving her hand in the direction of the croquet ground, where Trelease was knocking the balls about, and talking to Kate Haverstock.

"Boys and girls!" thought Mr. Garlick. "Is this what she learnt at New Athens?"

"Did you take the vows at New Athens?" he asked.

"The vows?—Don't you really know what New Athens is?" cried Sylvia.

"It is a woman's college, I have heard."

"Just so. Then how could we take vows?" said Sylvia scornfully.

"Only you talked as if you were an ancient Lady Abbess. I began to ask myself, 'Are New Athens' girls ever allowed to marry?'"

"Of course they are!" cried Sylvia. "Three of my classmates married directly they left. In fact, two were engaged some time before they graduated."

"Engaged! I am thankful to hear that human nature is not quite eliminated from New Athens. But did the Lady Principal read all the letters and the replies thereto?"

"You had better go to New Athens and ask," said Sylvia. "I am not going to say a word more. I will not have dear New Athens laughed at."

She turned away, and Mr. Garlick stood watching her as she moved among her guests, with a kind word and a pleasant smile for each. Was it possible, he asked himself, that such a lovely young woman had never loved? With that perfect form and springing step and delicately tinted cheek, she talked as if she were a hundred years old! It was laughable to hear those grandmotherly speeches from a creature like that. Was it that she had had some unhappy love affair, and so had made up her mind to forswear love for the rest of her life? Mr. Garlick gave a shudder of disgust at the idea. She was born to make some man happy, he thought. And he began to speculate on her age; and wonder how much over twenty she might be. And, just then, her face being turned to the sunlight, he could have sworn she was but eighteen; only that one never saw so much mind in the countenance of a girl of

eighteen. He walked up and down with his hands in his pockets, and wished he were five and twenty and could win her. Looking up when he had walked a little way beyond the garden into the uncleared part of the ground, he saw Mary Ellacombe walking with Raine. Raine was speaking very earnestly, and Mary was crying.

Mr. Garlick turned round and retraced his steps. The course of true love did not appear to run smooth in that direction. A few days ago he would have laughed; but to-day he was filled with pity for these love sorrows, though Mary was but a girl, and Raine not much more than a boy. "She is a mere girl," he thought, comparing her in his mind with Sylvia. "And a half educated little creature, no doubt. But what could she be crying about? When a girl does not want a man to make love to her, she tells him so, I suppose; at any rate she doesn't cry. What the dickens could she be crying about?"

As he entered the garden Mrs. Ellacombe came towards him. "You don't happen to have seen my daughter, Mr. Garlick?" she cried. She was not woman of the world enough to hide her anxiety. She had left Mary in the midst of a game, and had gone indoors to warm herself, for she was chilly with standing about; and she had been beguiled by Miss Priest's delicious tea and pleasant chat, and had forgotten her duennaship and her daughter. And now when she came to seek her, the game was over, and Mary was nowhere. She did not tell Mr. Garlick all this, but she showed so much perturbation in her inquiry whether he had seen her, that Mr. Garlick in his newly awakened

benevolence to lovers, felt sure that the little scene he had just witnessed might as well be finished without the intervention of a third person.

"Will you take my arm?" he said. "Miss Ellacombe was playing not very long ago. Perhaps she has gone into the house."

"No," said Mrs. Ellacombe, "I have just come from the house myself."

"Let us take a turn. Perhaps we may meet her." And he began to move in the direction that would lead Mrs. Ellacombe away from where he had seen Mary walking with Raine.

Mrs. Ellacombe walked a few steps, but she was too anxious to suit her gait to Mr. Garlick's. "I think I'll walk towards the wood," she said, taking her hand from his arm.

He offered to look for Mary, but she declined. She went on, and he strolled towards the house.

Mary and Raine meanwhile had continued their walk, so that they were emerging from the wood on one side when Mrs. Ellacombe entered it on the other, and Mr. Garlick met them on the verandah. "Mrs. Ellacombe was looking for you," he said as he approached.

Mary's eyes were red, and her voice was less composed than a young lady's should be, as she answered:—

"Perhaps she wishes me to go home. Where was she, Mr. Garlick?" Mr. Garlick indicated the point at which Mrs. Ellacombe had entered the wood, and as he did so, a smile came into Raine's face. "Shall I go and look for her?" said he. But Mary said she would rather go alone. Mr. Garlick turned away with a smile as Mary stepped down from the verandah.

"It looks something like a game of hide and seek," he said.

"I think it does," said Raine.

This was the conversation which Mr. Garlick had forborne to interrupt on the border of the wood.

"Look here, Miss Ellacombe, I can't stand this sort of thing any longer," said Raine.

"I don't know what you mean by 'this sort of thing,'" cried Mary bridling.

"Yes, you do. I mean flirting. Why do you let that little ass, Huish, flirt with you in that way?"

"I don't let him flirt with me. If he speaks to me I suppose I must answer him."

"I believe you do it to drive me mad."

"It is cruel of you to say that, and you know it is not true." Then it was that Mary burst into tears.

"By Jove!—Now I've made you cry. Oh, Mary, don't you know that I love you so I can't bear to see any one speak to you, If you would only love me, ever so little—"

"But I cannot," sobbed Mary.

"But why?—Why?" he insisted.

"If things were quite different, then perhaps—"

Raine put his arm round her waist and kissed her lips. "Then you do love me after all," he said exultantly. "And you shall be my wife—my darling wife."

Mary stood for an instant as if her breath were taken away. Then she disengaged herself. "What are you saying? I can never be your wife. Have I not said so plainly enough? Father and mother would never hear of it."

"Mary, will you marry me, and tell them afterwards?

I'll ride over to the Courthouse and get the license to-morrow."

Mary looked at him. "I think you have taken leave of your senses," she said.

Raine was taken aback. "Well, anyhow, we are engaged," he said, recovering himself. But Mary had recovered herself too. She had thrown off her armour only for an instant, but before he had had time to declare that she should be his wife, she had put it on again; to all outward appearance at least.

"We are not engaged, and we never can be," she said quietly. "And I think, please, Mr. Raine, that it would be better if we did not see each other any more."

Then it was Raine's turn to beg and entreat. How could she be so cruel? Did she not know that his love for her had saved him from destruction? "I was going to the dogs as fast as I could go when I met you. And you have been my salvation," he cried. Then Mary melted again, but still declared that an engagement was impossible; and by this time they found themselves on the verandah, where they met Mr. Garlick.

"A very charming, unaffected young woman," said Mr. Garlick, as he walked home with Trelease that evening.

"Delightfully so. But hardly to be called a woman, I should say."

"Well—girl—if you like. I never met with such a charming person in my life. And not a trace of affectation," cried Mr. Garlick. "Did you notice her eyes? One hardly ever sees such a lovely grey."

"They are not grey. I am quite sure of that," exclaimed Trelease.

"Not grey! Where are your eyes, man? And what beautiful hair she has! So bright, and yet no red in it. One hardly ever sees hair like that out of America."

"Why, Garlick, you must be blind! Her hair is black."

"Miss Luttrell's hair black!"

"Miss Luttrell! You began talking about a charming unaffected young person, and I thought you meant Miss Haverstock."

"Miss Haverstock! A mere school-girl! No, my dear fellow; I was alluding to Miss Luttrell."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Trelease. And they finished their walk in silence.

Mrs. Ellacombe said nothing to Mary that night. That there had been a scene of some sort she was sure. Girls do not have red eyes at parties, nor a husky voice when suddenly called upon to answer a question, unless there is a reason for it. But she hardly knew how to speak; because, though she felt that Mary was not to blame, nevertheless this love-making must be put a stop to. It was not till the next afternoon that she ventured to ask Mary the reason of her red eyes of the day before. "I could see you had been crying," she said. "Every one must have seen that."

"I could not help it," said Mary.

"What were you crying about?" There was a trace of sternness in the question, and Mary looked ready to burst into tears. "It was not my fault," she said at length.

"I never said you were to blame. You needn't think that, Mary."

"I told him it was no good asking; I never—never could marry him. I told him plainly, and I said he had better go away. And he said—he said—I had saved him from going to the dogs, and,—and—oh mother, I I know 'tis no use—but it is true. He is steady now: everybody says so."

Mrs. Ellacombe was silent for a moment. When she did speak her voice was harsh, though there was a quiver of emotion in it; for her mind was full of consternation at the mischief that had been done.

"You know what I said when we last talked this over, Mary?"

"I know," said Mary with a sigh.

"I haven't changed my opinion, and I don't see any reason for changing it."

"No," Mary murmured.

"The worst day's work a woman can do for herself is to marry a man in the hope of reforming him."

"But he is reformed," said Mary.

"Reformed! He speaks fair to you, but when you come to count up the time he has been living soberly it counts up by months—not years. Is that to be called 'reformed'?" A sigh was Mary's only answer. "Mary, even if he were a farmer like Cousin George, and every way suitable, it would be madness. Don't you ever let yourself think of it. Mary—" Mrs. Ellacombe rose from her chair and stood before her daughter—"Mary, I've lost all but you; and I think if the Lord was to take you, I shouldn't be long after you. But I'd sooner have it so, than see you live to be a drunkard's wife."

She stood still for a moment with her eyes fixed on

her child. Mary could not utter a word: she had never heard her mother speak in this way before, nor had she ever seen such an expression in her face. Mrs. Ellacombe looked at her steadily for an instant, and then left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. BLOSS APPLIES THE DISCIPLINE.

One day about this time Mr. Bloss might have been seen walking home from the post-office with signs of perturbation in his heavy countenance.

He had received a letter from his bishop. Now it must be understood that Bishop Thrasher, though he was not called "my lord"; though he did not live in a palace, nor sit on a canopied throne in a cathedral, nor sign himself by the Latinized name of his see—a see which was the size of an average European kingdom—though he did none of these things, yet he was a great man in his way: specially great in the eyes of a man of the calibre of Mr. Bloss.

Mr. Bloss had probably never heard of Napoleon's saying about every soldier carrying a marshal's *bâton* in his haversack; but the sentiment was within him. He had not been brought into contact with many great men in his life. The biggest man he knew in the old country was his father's landlord; and he was but a country squire. It had never entered into Mr. Bloss's mind that he himself could become such a one as the English squire. He would as soon have hoped to add cubits to

his stature. But it had seemed to him quite possible that he should become a bishop like Bishop Thrasher; particularly since his marriage with Miss Araminta B. Thompson. This lady never forgot that she was a Thompson, and she would have her husband believe that having married her, he might aspire as high as he pleased. Who was Bishop Thrasher? she would ask. Had anybody ever heard of a Thrasher who was anybody, before this Thrasher became a bishop? And as for Mis' Thrasher, her people were very plain people indeed; people whom you might meet perhaps at the Academy Commencement, but whom you would be quite sure not to meet anywhere else. Bishop Thrasher was, in Mrs. Bloss's opinion, a right homely, plain man. She had heard people praise his preaching, but for her part she did not call him an elegant preacher; far from it. It seemed to her that her Josiah could preach just as good a sermon, any time that he gave his mind to it. And if such an one as a Thrasher could rise to be a bishop, why not such another as Josiah Bloss?

Whenever this idea presented itself to the mind of Mr. Bloss, he caressed it as perhaps the French soldier caresses the idea of the marshal's *bâton*. Why should he not be a bishop?

A certain amount of popularity was necessary, and Mr. Bloss thought he might become popular, if he only had a good chance. It was also necessary to be a good preacher; to be ready in exhortation. Mr. Bloss did not see why he should not become a good preacher as well as a good exhorter in time. A bishop must also know how to govern men: and that, Mr. Bloss felt sure, was easier than writing sermons; only it had happened

once or twice, owing to untoward circumstances, that the governed had shown themselves to be ungovernable. But that they had been so was not Mr. Bloss's fault. A man must serve a certain apprenticeship to his trade, even in America. But there was not that pestilential drawback of learning; no wearisome load of useless Greek and Latin and Hebrew, and ecclesiastical and patristic literature, to be carried on one's back as in the Old Country; a very burden, such as a Christian might long to be rid of.

There, Mr. Bloss knew that he, and such as he, have as much chance of being enthroned bishop as of being crowned Emperor. Truly America offers a better field for ex-market-gardeners of the quality of Mr. Bloss.

It had not happened hitherto to Mr. Bloss to receive many letters from his bishop: his correspondence had been barely sufficient to enable him to recognise his handwriting.

"'Chinquapin,'" the postmaster remarked, as he handed him the letter over the counter;—"that's where you was at the semin—ary, ain't it, Mr. Bloss?"

"Chinquapin?" echoed Mr. Bloss. "Why, I don't know anybody there now. Oh, I see, it is in the handwriting of Bishop Thrasher." And then, being curious to know what his ecclesiastical superior could have to say to him, he opened and read the letter before leaving the store.

Then it was that his brow became black, and his face heavy with perplexity. The bishop had written—not in anger, truly—but in a tone of mild expostulation, as if it were just barely possible that some blame might lie at the door of the rector of Harmonia—for what? For the reputed drunkenness of Harmonia! And the

bishop enclosed a newspaper cutting, containing an article on the colony of drunken Englishmen. The newspaper was the *Chinquapin Blade*, but the article was reprinted almost *in extenso* from the *Jonesville Mugwump*. Mr. Bloss was so disturbed as he read, first the letter, and then the newspaper cutting, and then the letter again, that he felt unable to go home without taking counsel of some one. As his churchwarden, Major Forepaw, naturally occurred to him, he entered the Major's office, but the Major was away. Mr. Macfarlane, however, was there, and to Mr. Macfarlane he unbosomed himself. Mr. Macfarlane asked for the newspaper cutting, and Mr. Bloss gave it him, with the letter.

"That's not a pleasant sort of letter for the minister of a parish to get from his bishop," he remarked, when Mr. Macfarlane had read it.

"I don't see that you need be put about by it," said the other. "He asks whether it is true that such a state of affairs does exist. Well, you can say that such a state of affairs does not exist, and there is an end of it."

Mr. Bloss shook his head and frowned. "An end of it? You know that if enough mud be thrown, some is sure to stick."

"I know that well enough. See here, Mr. Bloss, it seems to me I've seen something very like this article before. You remember when there was a party of wild young English fellows at the hotel for a week or two:—I mean the lot that ripped up their pillows one night and threw the feathers out in the street. Well, an article came out then in the *Jonesville Mugwump* that was exactly like this. I haven't the file; I never keep those papers. But as I read the cutting, it occurred to

me I had seen something exactly like it before; and that must be it."

Mr. Bloss was silent for a moment. "It is atrocious," he said at last.

"Oh," said Mr. Macfarlane carelessly, "depend upon it, they only wanted a little cheap sensation. Or, maybe, they wanted the opportunity for a denial. Or, maybe, again, they found themselves short of copy. Generally, they fill up with cake receipts, or poetry; but perhaps they had nothing handy of just the right length, so they put that in. I shouldn't bother about it, if I were you."

"I must make some sort of answer to the bishop."

"Well, I should say that would be easy enough."

Mr. Bloss was silent for a moment. "I suppose you would have no objection to my giving your explanation of this," he said, holding up the newspaper cutting.

"Certainly not. In point of fact, Harmonia is getting to be very quiet; much quieter than I supposed it would ever be. The noisiest ones have gone off, and the rest have settled down to work. I don't think Harmonia is at all in a bad way, myself."

Mr. Bloss went home and wrote his letter, being careful to say that Mr. Macfarlane could endorse him in every particular as to the present good behaviour of Harmonia. The bishop replied, saying he was glad to hear that the reports were so much exaggerated: but begging him at the same time to use unceasing vigilance to keep the sheep from straying, and to be firm and gentle in reclaiming those who had already strayed from the right way.

It was in short the ordinary, safe, noncommittal, pastoral epistle. And the reproof in it was but the dash of vinegar to the spoonful of oil in a well made salad

dressing. But even so, Mr. Bloss made a wry face at it. Because he was apt at correcting his flock, it by no means followed that he could bear the lightest touch of the rod on his own back with equanimity.

"I have been too lenient," he said to his wife. "Had I denounced from the pulpit the cases of drunkenness that have fallen under my observation, the bishop couldn't write as if I wanted being told my duty. Vigilant! Of course I know I must be vigilant. But there never was such a stiff-necked lot as the people here!"

"They are a deal worse in the mining towns, I should say," was Mrs. Bloss's reply.

"In one way they are. But I wouldn't say they are as stiff-necked. Englishmen are a stiff-necked lot, let me tell you; a stiff-necked lot," said Mr. Bloss, stiffening his own neck as he spoke. "Look at that man Denning. He stands off now as he did the first day we met. He pretends not to; but I see through it. Look at the stand-offishness of the whole lot of them. In any other community, wouldn't there be more friendliness towards the pastor?"

"Well, anyhow, Mr. Bloss, you know you didn't find it all smooth walking at Emporium before we came here. After all, I don't know as the Harmonia people are so bad."

"There were difficulties, of course, but there was more friendliness. I tell you, Araminta, that Englishmen are a stiff-necked lot. They want honeyed words, but they'll get none from me. If they show me the cold shoulder, so be it. I make no pretence to carnal learning, and I don't write Honourable before my name; I merely claim to be a plain preacher of the plain

gospel. And that they want mighty little of. Upon their heads be it!"

It seemed to Mr. Bloss that it would be well to have a sermon ready to preach, should there be occasion for it, so that it might not be said of him that when a case of drunkenness arose, he shrank from administering a pastoral rebuke.

Unfortunately, among his collection of sermons he could not find one directly bearing on the subject; and he spent hours in his study toiling and groaning over his self-imposed task. It could not be said of him that he wore out his brains; for he had no brains worth mentioning to wear out. But he wore out his temper and got an attack of dyspepsia. And then he came to the conclusion that the work was too hard for him in his present state of health.

"I'm sure I wouldn't bother about it," said his wife.

"What can I do, Araminta?" said the unhappy man. "Here is this burden laid upon me and I must bear it. Oh!"

Mrs. Bloss was in doubt whether he alluded to his physical state, or to the dire necessity of producing an original sermon. She suggested sending for Dr. Bontecoe.

Mr. Bloss declined. Dr. Bontecoe was a scoffer, he said, and he would have none of his advice.

"I reckon he could prescribe for you, anyhow," said Mrs. Bloss. "It don't matter what he thinks. And it's not as if you'd have a bill to pay. Of course he wouldn't charge you anything. And if he did, I should just say it wasn't custom—ary to charge ministers."

Mr. Bloss waved his hand, as much as to say he

would hear nought of such a proposal; and Mrs. Bloss knowing the state of his temper, did not press it further. Her husband's refusal was not based on his fear of not being able to pay; he would have had no objection in the world to "deadhead" Dr. Bontecoe or any other man. He had before now heard the doctor hold forth on the preventibility of disease; of pure air, pure water, exercise and abstemiousness, as prophylactics; and most of what he said was blasphemy to Mr. Bloss. Should he send for him just now, he might receive some such advice; he might be ordered to leave off his coffee, and abstain from the hot rolls and fried chicken, and the batter cakes and waffles which his soul loved. He might even be debarred from meat, and bidden to confine himself for forty days to a diet of dry toast and weak tea. Now Mr. Bloss was prepared to do, and to suffer, as much as a man might in reason; but he hoped he never would be so wicked as to keep Lent; Lent being the season of the year to such poor benighted creatures as went by the dates in the Church calendar. Mr. Bloss believed that all such ordinances savoured more of the death-dealing letter than the life-giving spirit. His observance of Lent was confined strictly to a dinner of salt fish and egg sauce on Good Friday, with hot cakes for tea in remembrance of the hot cross buns of his younger days.

When his wife left him he took up the newspaper. When we say newspaper, let it be understood that it was a religious newspaper. He thought he might possibly get a "wrinkle" from it, as he had done before; and so he did.

At the head of the advertisement column stood the

advertisement of the lectures of a popular temperance orator. The price was high, Mr. Bloss thought: but then a reduction was always made to clergymen. He wrote a note and posted it himself, inquiring of the publisher what the reduced figure would be. Then he took a long walk, which was good for his dyspepsia; and, while waiting for the publisher's reply, set to work about his next Sunday's sermon. His temper was so much more equable at tea-time that his wife noticed it and rejoiced. The subject of the sermon was much in her mind. It could hardly have been otherwise, considering how much she and the rest of the small household had suffered the last few days from the dyspeptic humours of the head of the house. She introduced the subject cautiously; cunningly, one might say.

"I wouldn't bother my head one five minutes more about that sermon, if I were you," she said. "You're ever so much better for the walk you got this afternoon. You ought to walk more and study less. If you lose your health you'll never get one cent the more for it, nor a thank you either. I want to know why that sermon on temperance won't do that you preached — let me see—about a twelvemonth ago."

"Too recent," said Mr. Bloss, shaking his head, "and not half rousing enough. That's what's the trouble."

"Could you fix it up any way? I saw an advertisement—" she jumped up and fetched the paper which Mr. Bloss had already seen. "There," she said, pointing to the advertisement of the lectures of a popular temperance orator, "couldn't you get a few ideas from a book like that?"

Mr. Bloss did not say that he had already written to ask the price of the book. He said "H—m, four dollars seems a great deal, don't it?"

"But it wouldn't be four dollars to you. Do write and find out the price. I'm sure I shouldn't mind copying a bit here and there, if 'twas *my* sermon. It's quite a special subject, like astronomy or poetry, or anything they lecture about."

"H—m," said Mr. Bloss again. "Well, I'll think about it."

In a few days the publisher's reply came. The price of the book was three dollars, twenty-five cents, cash.

"He ought to make it three dollars," said Mrs. Bloss, "only seventy-five cents off is what I call shabby. And after all," she added, with an after-thought of thrifty regret, "after all, you may never want it. It seems to me the longest time since I saw any tipsy men about."

As it was clearly nobody's business whence he got his inspiration, Mr. Bloss, instead of ordering the book to be sent by mail, in which case it would perhaps have its wrapper taken off by the postmaster or the postmaster's wife, ordered it by express, thus rendering it necessary for him to go himself from Harmonia Junction to Jonesville Station to get it out of the express office. But, living in such a wicked world as Mr. Bloss did, the wisdom of the serpent was very necessary to him. It was a bigger book than he expected. As he handled it, he felt, even while it was unopened and unread, that he had got his pennyworth. It would be hard indeed, he thought, if he could not "fix up" a sermon with such help as this.

He had taken the southern-bound train from Harmonia Junction, and had to wait till the afternoon for the northern-bound train, to take him back to Harmonia. The train was full and he could hardly find a seat.

From the smoking car next to the one in which he sat, came sounds of merriment and confused singing. Two tunes were being sung in different keys; and he managed to make out as the train slackened before reaching Harmonia Junction, that one tune was "Scots wha hae," and the other "Rule Britannia."

Among the passengers who were getting off the train, he observed Mr. Macfarlane, who had been at the other end of the car. "They seem to be having a good time in there," said Mr. Macfarlane, nodding his head towards the smoking-car as he passed close to Mr. Bloss. On the platform was Major Forepaw with several strangers whom he was personally conducting to Harmonia. There were also two persons who had descended from the smoking-car, and who now approached arm-in-arm. Mr. Bloss and Mr. Macfarlane at once recognised them as young Huish and Mr. Macgregor. Huish was leading a dog by a string, and was looking backward at the dog which was evidently a new purchase. And for a moment it appeared as though the dog were leading Huish, rather than Huish leading the dog. And then a negro, who was walking one way and looking the other, fell over the dog's string into the arms of Mr. Macgregor. And then the dog howled and things got generally mixed.

Mr. Bloss caught hold of Mr. Macfarlane's arm.

"Look at those two!" he said. "They are both drunk."

"Are they?" said Mr. Macfarlane.

"Not a doubt of it."

"It depends on what ye call drunk," said the Scotchman.

This answer, to Mr. Bloss's mind, was the merest tergiversation.

"He may not be drunk for a Scotchman," he said angrily, "but I call it drunk for an Englishman."

"Do you?" was Mr. Macfarlane's answer. "Well, maybe you've been more in the way of seeing drunk folk than I have. What part of England might you hail from?"

Mr. Bloss turned on his heel and walked away, not deigning an answer. He set Mr. Macfarlane down as a coward, and could hardly refrain from telling him so.

Now Mr. Macfarlane was no coward, but he was prudent. He did not believe that either of the two was perfectly sober, but neither did he believe that either was drunk. And he knew moreover, what Mr. Bloss did not know, that Huish could not take a single glass of lager beer without showing the effect of it in his demeanour. Why did he ever take that single glass? Why does any man ever do anything that is foolish? We have seen how Mr. Bloss overate himself, and had to pay the penalty in dyspepsia. He chose to call himself abstemious in the matter of drinks, and so perhaps he was. Yet poor, harmless, foolish Huish would have kept all Harmonia in an uproar had he taken the tenth part of what was imbibed with impunity by the abstemious Mr. Bloss.

Mr. Bloss hurried towards the hotel omnibus, which was being laden with the passengers and their portmanteaus, under the superintendence of Major Forepaw. The Major shook hands readily enough, and performed a rapid general introduction, *more suo*, including the whole of the personally-conducted with a grand wave of his arm.

"Mr. Bloss, our worthy pastor," he said. Mr. Bloss touched his hat and made a hurried bow.

"Major," he began, "one moment, if you please."

"I'm sorter pushed just now," was the Major's reply. "The omnibus is about to start, don't you see?"

"One instant. I wish to call your attention to—"

"Call at the office any time to-morrow. Can't stay now."

"Major Forepaw," said Mr. Bloss with solemnity, "as churchwarden, sir, I call your attention to a case of drunkenness—to two cases of drunkenness, sir."

The Major got angry. "What is it to me if you'd got fifty cases of drunkenness? Don't keep me fooling here." He jumped in, the conductor slammed the door, and the omnibus rattled off, leaving Mr. Bloss choking with dust, rage, and astonishment.

That night he sat up late and sketched out his sermon. His anger at the cowardice of Mr. Macfarlane, and at the rudeness and indifference of Major Forepaw, the man who should have been his right hand, supplied an unwonted stimulus to his sluggish mind. He required no "crib" to help him to denunciation of such conduct as theirs. He felt that it would serve them both right if he mentioned them by name from the pulpit. He was even more angry with them than with

the offenders for whose special benefit the sermon was to be preached. He resolved that he would make Mr. Macfarlane bear witness in spite of himself.

The little Harmonia world went on smoothly and peaceably enough while these thunderbolts were being forged. Huish was quiet enough by the time he reached his home, and Mr. Macgregor—if he had been slightly merry—was as subdued as usual when he seated himself at the family teatable. It may be said with certainty that had there been any visible transgression, Mrs. Macgregor would have visited it with the rod she always kept in pickle for her spouse. But neither on that evening nor on any other evening of that week was the rod taken out of pickle. And so the week waned and Sunday came.

The church was fuller than usual; there were more than a dozen of the personally-conducted strangers, who were placed in a front seat and supplied with much ostentation by the Major with hymn-books and prayer-books. There was also a sprinkling of people who were not regular attendants, but who wanted to go somewhere for a change; and of women who, if they had no new spring bonnets themselves, hoped to see the new spring bonnets of other women—of Miss Luttrell in particular. Indeed, since Sylvia's coming the female attendance in church had been noticeably better, for that very reason.

Sylvia herself remarked to Mr. Garlick, as he brought her buggy out from under the trees in the church lot, that Mr. Bloss had preached a much better sermon than usual. Something seemed to have stirred him up.

"Yes," said Mr. Garlick, "I found myself listening unawares. Some of it was very good—of its kind. Can't say I care much for that style of thing myself. But I was wondering who wrote it."

"Who wrote it?"

"The style is quite different from anything we have been treated to as yet."

"I have not heard so many of his sermons, you see."

"I am sure Mr. Bloss could not have written it."

Sylvia laughed. Then she said:—"I think you are strangely prejudiced."

"Do you mean to say you think Mrs. Bloss wrote it?"

"No. You know I meant nothing of the kind. I don't believe she could write a sermon."

"But somebody must have written it. Perhaps we shall know one day," said Mr. Garlick, as he handed her the reins.

Sylvia shook her head at him as she drove off. "Well," she said to Miss Priest when they were half way home, "if I were Mr. Bloss, I could not stay among people who disliked me so. I should have to resign and go away."

"He may resign with my good leave," said Miss Priest, who had not yet forgiven Mrs. Bloss for taking a basket with her to receive contributions when she went to people's houses. "You depend upon it, Sylvy, there's some good reason for it when a man is popular with nobody. There's a streak of meanness in that man you haven't come upon yet."

It so happened that Mr. Macfarlane was one of the few who had not gone to church that morning. The Major had listened to the sermon for a little while, and then,

settling himself in an attitude of benevolent attention, had thought steadily of something else. So that, in so far as the sermon was addressed to the consciences of the two churchwardens, it completely failed in its purpose.

But it was on Monday afternoon that the real thunderbolts fell. The sermon was but the muttering of the tempest.

The mail had been brought by the negro messenger to Mrs. Macgregor as she sat at work; and she opened an envelope addressed to her husband, supposing it to be a bill. This, however, was what she read:—

"THE RECTORY,
"*Saturday.*

"DEAR SIR,

"IT is with much regret that I address you on the present subject. I think however that as your pastor it is my duty to let you know, that you were seen on the platform at Harmonia Junction, on Wednesday afternoon the 16th of this month, in a state of intoxication, in company with Mr. Huish. Under these circumstances, unless proper reparation be made for the fault, I warn you not to present yourself as a communicant at Easter. It is with regret that I adopt what may be considered harsh measures, but the Rubric is sufficiently plain, and my path is marked out for me without any choice in the matter.

"I may add that Mr. Macfarlane, who is one of the churchwardens, corroborates me entirely, though with great unwillingness.

"I am,
"Yours faithfully,
"JOSIAH BLOSS."

Mrs. Macgregor read the letter over twice, before she could take in the sense of it. At last she laid it down, thinking it was a hoax. She remembered nothing in particular about Wednesday afternoon. Mr. Macgregor had gone to Jonesville by the morning train, and had returned by the afternoon train in time for tea. He often did so, and he was as sober on Wednesday afternoon as on any other day. Had he not been so she knew she could not but have noticed it and remembered it.

After tea, when Mr. Macgregor had settled down for his evening pipe and his Scotch weekly newspaper, she placed the letter before him.

"I opened it; I thought it was a bill," she said.

Mr. Macgregor looked at the address. "Looks like the parson's fist," he said.

"Ah, then it is not a hoax," said Mrs. Macgregor, and she looked—she could not help looking—keenly at her husband as he read it. Not a hoax? Then, what was it? Was it possible her husband had dared overstep the bounds of moderation? She could hardly believe it. He sat staring at the letter, and she stood staring at him. Their eyes met, and his glance did not quail before hers.

He said: "Margaret, you needn't look at me in that way. The man must be mad, raving mad, to write me a letter like this."

Mrs. Macgregor considered. "He was not raving mad on Sunday."

"That's true. And yet—surely this can't be a hoax. Macfarlane an unwilling witness!—Now I think of it, I did see Macfarlane, but not near enough to speak to him."

"Were you in company with young Huish?"

"Well, we got out of the train together, and he had some trouble with a dog he'd bought, so I just lent a hand till he could get the beast into his cart. And then I went my way, and I suppose he went his."

"Was he tipsy?"

"Oh, no, I should say not. No more tipsy than I was myself."

"I wonder whether the letter is a hoax," said Mrs. Macgregor.

"I'll have to find out about that. I'll see Macfarlane first thing to-morrow."

In his secret soul Mr. Macgregor did not suppose the letter to be other than genuine. He knew perfectly well that young Huish, who was in his company most of the time, had become noisy after a visit to a couple of saloons, though he seemed to have drunk scarcely anything. He had had several glasses of beer himself, and had thought what poor wishy-washy stuff it was, and how different from Scotch ale. Huish was quiet by the time they got back to Harmonia, and Mr. Macgregor had not thought it necessary to mention to his wife that he had met Huish, or that he had come back in the same train with him. He felt a sincere pity for the poor young fellow whose weak head would not stand so much as a glass of lager beer.

Thus fell one of the thunderbolts.

The other—the letter which Mr. Bloss wrote to Huish—was the exact counterpart of the one which he had sent to Mr. Macgregor. Huish, who was lounging on the sofa, read it and jumped up as if he had been stung. "It's the meanest—the most disgraceful—why,

the man must be stark, staring mad to write a letter like this," cried Huish, stamping with rage. "Just read that, Raine, and tell me whether I was intoxicated when I came home last Wednesday."

"Oh, no, I know you weren't. I should have seen it fast enough if you had been," said Raine.

"It's disgraceful," cried Huish. "I never was so insulted in my life. I'll break every bone in his body for this."

"Oh, you can't," said Raine, who had hastily scanned the letter. "Clergymen don't fight."

"Then I'll have an apology. I'm bound to do something. Look here, Raine, would you sit down and take all that quietly if you were in my place?"

"I don't think I should," said Raine, who could not but feel how lucky it had perhaps been for him that he had not accompanied Huish on that Wednesday. Supposing he had received such a letter from Mr. Bloss! How hard would it have been for him to clear himself, even though innocent.

"It's worse than a slap in the face; it's worse than —than anything I can think of," said Huish. "If my uncle the bishop were to hear of it, he'd never leave me a sixpence. He's an awfully particular old man."

"You are not obliged to tell him," said Raine.

Huish read the letter again and declared that Macfarlane deserved a bigger thrashing than Bloss did, and he should get it, too.

"I'd have a talk with Macfarlane first, if I were you," said Raine.

When Mr. Macfarlane learnt next morning from both Mr. Macgregor and Huish how Mr. Bloss had made use of

his name, he was very angry, and quite as determined as were the other two, to make Mr. Bloss apologise. He smiled when Huish talked of knocking the man down first, and making him apologise after. It was all very well for boys like Huish to talk of knocking a man down, though Mr. Macfarlane felt that, should Huish knock Mr. Bloss down, he should not feel called upon to go out of his way to pick him up. For himself he would prefer the apology; but it should be a written apology. That would give him the whip hand over Mr. Bloss as long as Mr. Bloss chose to remain in Harmonia; whereas if he knocked Mr. Bloss down he would "give himself away." Mr. Bloss would always have it in his power to point at him as the man who had assaulted him. He had no mind to be pointed at and named to strangers as a brawler. When Mrs. Macfarlane came to hear of the matter, she was even more angry than were the others. She had her own private thoughts as to the condition of the two gentlemen on the Wednesday afternoon. They might have been sober, and they might not. If not, it would not have been the first time, she was sure. But she was just as sure that her husband could never have said a word to justify Mr. Bloss in bringing his name in as a witness.

"If I were you," she said to him, "I'd never speak to that man again. I know one thing. There will be no more tit-bits sent to the rectory from this house as long as I'm boss."

"He is an ungrateful man," said Mr. Macgregor, who had in his mind certain bales of hay supplied gratis from his barn for the rector's horse, during the winter, when hay was selling at a good price.

"Ungrateful!" echoed Huish. "Why even I have sent him things, though I've set up housekeeping for such a short time. And I pay just as much for my seat in church as if Harmonia were a country town in England. I asked Mr. Tregellas, and he said that was what he did. And of course I didn't want to be shabby, you know."

"I do wish we could get rid of Mr. Bloss and have some one who was not always getting into hot water," said Mrs. Macfarlane.

"That is the difficulty. He may be as unpleasant as he likes, but as long as he commits no crime——"

"Oh dear, how I wish he would commit a crime!—just a little one," said Mrs. Macfarlane. Then they all laughed.

"But we might starve him out," said Mr. Macgregor.

"To be sure, we might starve him out," said Mrs. Macfarlane, clapping her hands.

Mr. Macfarlane shook his head in dissent. "As long as we choose to consider ourselves part of his congregation, we are bound to contribute to his support."

When Mr. Macfarlane had finished his business at the experimental garden, he went on to the manager's office, where he found as he expected, Mr. Macgregor and Huish, who had gone before and were closeted with the Major. The Major was chewing imperturbably, Mr. Macgregor was sitting with his arms folded as if he had said his say, and Huish was swinging his riding whip about and saying,—"By Jove, you know, there are some things a fellow isn't bound to stand, clergyman or no clergyman."

"Forepaw," said Mr. Macfarlane as he entered, "if

you are not engaged I'd like to speak to you for a moment."

"All right," said the Major. He rose and followed his assistant manager into the inner-room. Mr. Macfarlane closed the door, and the Major hitching himself on to the table, said—"Well,"—and took a fresh chew.

"I presume you've seen the letters Bloss has written to those two," said Mr. Macfarlane. The Major nodded and chewed on.

"Well, I want to make you understand—as Bloss's friend——"

"Oh, don't set me down as Bloss's friend," the Major ejaculated.

"Well, you are his churchwarden, anyhow."

"I am his churchwarden, worse luck."

"Well, look here, Forepaw, this thing must stop. Bloss had no more business to use my name as endorsing his statement than he had to use yours."

The Major opened his eyes a little. Mr. Macfarlane repeated to him as he had repeated to Macgregor and Huish, the exact words uttered by him at the station, in answer to Mr. Bloss.

"He'll have to apologise," said Mr. Macfarlane. "And that's what I wished to speak to you about. Either he sends a written apology, or I will write to the bishop and place the whole matter before him. If I were to go to Bloss myself, I might lose my temper. And I don't see what would be the good of losing my temper, so I come to you. If you won't take the matter up, I'll have to go to the Colonel."

"You stick to what you said?" the Major inquired.

"Stick to it! I should rather say I did stick to it!"

"Because Bloss might stick to his version too."

"That's so," said Mr. Macfarlane. "But, in my experience, a liar is usually a coward. And if ever a man wrote what he knew to be a lie, he did when he wrote that letter!"

"Were they tight?" said the Major with a jerk of the head towards the door of the room they had just quitted.

"As tight as you were when Bloss spoke to you at the station."

"If they were as sober as I was, I call them very sober indeed. Oh!" he said, stretching his arms with an expression of disgust,—"fact is, Bloss don't know enough to go indoors when it rains. That's what he don't."

There was some more talk on the subject when they returned to the room where Mr. Macgregor and Huish were still sitting. It was at last agreed that they, as well as Mr. Macfarlane, should write each a note to Mr. Bloss, and see what came of it before taking any further steps. Mr. Macfarlane sat down and wrote his at once, and took it to the post-office, but Mr. Macgregor and Huish, who were less accustomed to the use of the pen, went home; Mr. Macgregor to get his wife to help him in the composition of his letter, and Huish to manage his with Raine's help.

Mr. Bloss had been greatly gratified that morning by a visit from Mr. Ellacombe. That a member of a rival "church" should come to thank him for his sermon, was a feather in his cap which made him feel ready to undergo another attack of dyspepsia, if by that means he might produce another such sermon.

"Yes, sir," said old Ellacombe, "you hit the right nail

on the head when you pointed out the moderate drinkers as sharers in the sin."

"Oh,—ah,—" said Mr. Bloss. "Did I say that? Well, sir, I might have said something to that effect; I don't quite call it to mind."

"'Those who countenance the sin if they are not actually partakers of the sin themselves.' Those were the identical words, sir."

"Oh,—ah,—yes. To be sure; to be sure," said Mr. Bloss: who, nevertheless, had not intended his words to be taken in any such sense.

And when Mr. Ellacombe took his leave after again expressing his thanks, and prophecying the happy time when Mr. Bloss and all his congregation should be total abstainers, Mr. Bloss did not contradict him, and did not quote the advice Saint Paul gave to Timothy respecting his dyspepsia.

It was something to boast of, that the sermon of an Episcopal clergyman had called forth a tribute of admiration from a Methodist. Mr. Bloss sat from the time Mr. Ellacombe left him till dinner time, thinking in what way he might best publish the glorious fact.

But he was not quite so elated when the afternoon's post brought three letters demanding a written apology, from Mr. Macfarlane, Mr. Macgregor, and Huish. They were all couched in nearly the same terms. Mr. Macfarlane had on second thoughts omitted his threat to bring the matter before the bishop. He would keep that card for a while, and see how Mr. Bloss was inclined to behave himself. Huish's letter was gentlemanly and to the point. There was not a word about horsewhipping or knocking Mr. Bloss down. "You

should bear in mind," Raine had said when called in to assist in the composition of the letter, "that this may be shown about everywhere if the man is inclined to bluster. For heaven's sake let it be the letter of a gentleman." And Huish had let himself be persuaded, though he protested that a cad like Bloss would not care a straw for such a mild summons to apologise.

Mr. Bloss had said nothing to his wife about the letters he had written to Mr. Macgregor and to Huish. He had, as he believed, the Rubric to guide him, and it would have ill-befitted his place to take counsel on the matter with any but a minister of his own church. Major Forepaw's behaviour had shown sufficiently that he was not the man to take counsel with. But there was the Rubric, and there was the bishop's letter urging him to vigilance, and what more could he want? He had not supposed that either of the persons he rebuked would like it. Did any sinner ever like having his sin pointed out to him, or being made to suffer for it?

That the sinners would show their resentment in some way was to be expected: but he had not expected that the resentment would take this particular form. That they should demand an apology only showed what hardened offenders they were. That Mr. Macfarlane should resent his name having been used merely showed that he was hand in glove with the other two. To accede to the demand of either of the three was far from Mr. Bloss's intention.

"You can read them," he said, as Mrs. Bloss took up one of the letters. "You'll see what a man gets by doing his dooty."

Mrs. Bloss read them, muttering something as she read the last, which happened to be Mr. Macfarlane's.

"Well," she said, throwing it down, "let you alone for getting yourself into a mess. Don't you know by this time, that the Macgregors and the Macfarlanes are the best friends we have here? Now you've quarrelled with them, and it will be a good hundred dollars out of your pocket, let me tell you!"

"That is not the proper way to look at it, Araminta," said Mr. Bloss, who had not expected such a violent philippic.

"I don't see what other way there is to look at it. It would not have mattered about that young Huish so much. If he were to get mad and turn his back on you—he and the whole crowd of young fellows in Harmonia—it would not be so much out of your pocket. But the Macgregors—and the Macfarlanes!—Oh, gracious mercy!"

"Well, my dear, I did what I considered my dooty——"

Mrs. Bloss had risen and was walking about the room.

"Oh!" she cried, "you hush! Duty, indeed! Why did you send those letters without saying a word to me? And now you'll have to sing small. See if you don't."

"I have not the slightest intention of singing small," said Mr. Bloss, with great dignity.

"But you'll have to. If you don't apologise, they will make the place too hot to hold you."

"Then we can go somewhere else. That's easy enough."

"It's easy to talk. You pack your satchel and off you go, and leave me behind to pack up and do all the moving. And suppose we don't find another place to go to?"

"Hardly likely; but we need not discuss that. You really need not get so heated over the matter, Araminta. I have acted as I am convinced the bishop would expect me to act, and I have very little misgiving as to the way this matter may turn out. There will be a fuss for a day or two, and then it will die away. And don't forget that Mr. Ellacombe has thought it worth while to come expressly to thank me for preaching that sermon."

"Oh, the sermon!—You might have preached against drunkenness from now till Christmas, and nobody would have taken offence. It's the letters that bother me. Now, I suppose that when I see Mis' Macgregor and Mis' Macfarlane, they won't speak; that's what I shall get by your doing your duty, Mr. Bloss."

"I am very sorry, my dear——" Mr. Bloss began.

"Oh, bother!—" Mrs. Bloss replied; but by this time she was crying with vexation. "And such a beautiful pair of chickens as Mis' Macfarlane sent on Tuesday, and a cake, and a mess of salsify!—Tell you what, you'll have to write and say you didn't mean it—or something or other."

"I have not the slightest intention of saying I didn't mean it," said Mr. Bloss.

"Well, you just worry the life out of me, that's all I know," said Mrs. Bloss, and with that she walked out of the room and shut herself up in her chamber. Mr. Bloss thought that, on the whole, he had not come so badly out of the discussion. When a woman retires to her bedroom to weep, it is generally a sign that she feels herself to be vanquished. He read the letters again, and came to the conclusion that he would send them no answer at all. He would treat them with silent contempt.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. BLOSS BACKS DOWN.

When two days had passed without any reply to the demand for an apology, the aggrieved trio began to feel impatient, and Huish reverted to his original proposition. "It was all very well for Raine to say, 'Don't threaten. Write a gentlemanly letter.' But, by Jove! what's the use of writing a gentlemanly letter to a cad like that? I shall have to thrash that man!"

Nor were things comfortable at the rectory. Mrs. Bloss constantly bewailed herself, and declared that never was a husband so little studious of his wife's comfort as Mr. Bloss.

"I certainly did not consult my own comfort," Mr. Bloss retorted, "when I acted in accordance with the bishop's suggestion."

"Oh, don't talk to me about the bishop's suggestion; of course the bishop was bound to take some notice of that stupid newspaper article. I declare I haven't dared show my face on the street ever since Tuesday, for fear whom I should meet."

"There is the consciousness of rectitude—" began Mr. Bloss.

"Well, then, I haven't got any such thing about me," said his wife. "It's just as likely as not that you were wrong."

"Araminta!"

"I tell you, you should have waited till you saw those men rolling in the gutter, and then you'd have had a clear case."

"We had better have no more discussion on the matter," said Mr. Bloss.

"I don't want to discuss it. Let me tell you this, though. If you make the place unbearable to me, I shall go home and stay with father, and take Willie with me. And then, when everybody has given you the go by, you will see how nice it is not to have a soul to speak to."

Mrs. Bloss walked off without waiting for a reply, nor indeed was her husband prepared with one. He knew to what a state of discomfort he would be reduced if she carried out her threat and left him to the uncovenanted mercies of Aunt Jinsie. The coffee would be like charcoal, the batter cakes would be burnt, the chicken would be raw, and the bread and biscuits like dough. His very bed would be made in an upside down fashion, and there would be black "comp'ny" and banjo playing, and perhaps prayer meetings in the kitchen, from morning till night. Mr. Bloss considered that not even in the prosecution of his clerical duty could his bishop expect him to endure such misery as that. But still he was not prepared to send any answer to those angry letters. He thought that in time the anger would die away and things go on as usual. And even supposing that the Macgregors and

Macfarlanes chose to turn their backs on himself and his wife, was not Miss Luttrell a tower of strength? The only woman of independent means, she was also the only one who had treated him with the respect and deference which were due to a pastor. With Miss Luttrell to back him, he could afford to defy all Harmonia. His wife might hide herself and sulk if she so pleased, but he should not hide himself. He walked out, intending to get his newspaper, when he heard himself called by name, and saw the Major at the door of his office, beckoning to him.

"Say, what are you going to do about those letters?"

Mr. Bloss hesitated, not feeling quite sure whether he was to treat Major Forepaw as a friend or as an enemy. The Major however had no time for "fooling" with anybody just then, and he reiterated his question. "You know what I mean. Macfarlane's letter, and Macgregor's, and Huish's. If there are any more I don't know of them."

"Oh yes," said Mr. Bloss, who saw that the Major was in no friendly humour. "I received letters from those gentlemen, certainly."

"Wal, what are you going to do about them?"

"What am I going to do?" said Mr. Bloss, caressing his chin. "I am going to do—nothing."

"Wal,"—said the Major, "it's nothing to me. I don't care one green apple peeling for the whole crowd of 'em. But I tell you, you'll have to answer Macfarlane's letter. You'll just have to," he insisted, as Mr. Bloss made a motion of dissent. "As for the other two, if they weren't tight then, they've been tight before. But Macfarlane!—Macfarlane is as mad as a setting hen at

your bringing in his name as you did. You will just have to back down, as far as Macfarlane is concerned."

"And supposing I refuse to back down?" said Mr. Bloss.

"Then Macfarlane declares he's going to write to the bishop, and he'll do it too."

"Two can play at that game," said Mr. Bloss. "Which account of the matter do you suppose the bishop is likely to believe? His, or mine?"

"Wal, I can't say. But you ought to know it's unjustifiable to use a man's name without his authority."

"I said that Mr. Macfarlane was a most unwilling witness. And so he was."

"I don't know as you had any right to say that."

"I tell you," said Mr. Bloss, who was fast losing his temper, "that man prevaricated, sir. I look on it as a positive case of prevarication. I saw through it at the time. He could not deny the fact, and he tried to get out of admitting it, sir, in what I must call the most cowardly manner."

"Yes?" drawled the Major. "Well now, would you like to repeat all that to Macfarlane's face? Because I tell you fairly, 'twas a very different version he gave me."

"No, sir, I wish to have no dealings with Mr. Macfarlane, either personally or by letter."

The Major laughed. "That would suit you best, no doubt. Whether it will meet Macfarlane's views is another thing."

With a wave of the hand Mr. Bloss put aside Mr. Macfarlane's views, and passed up the street. The Major went back to his desk, and soon forgot him and his quarrel, having in hand the far more important

business of persuading each one of the personally conducted strangers that the lot he wished him to buy was situated more advantageously than any other lot in the settlement.

Mr. Bloss walked on to get his newspaper, and found besides three more letters, each reiterating the demand for an apology. Mr. Macfarlane's was the longest of the three. He now declared his intention of making a complaint to the bishop unless Mr. Bloss would apologise for having used his name without his authority. Mr. Bloss burnt all three letters as soon as he was safe inside his study with the door shut. If his wife got hold of them there was no saying what she might not do. It was very disagreeable to have her sulky; but even when sulky she attended to her duties; and he would rather have her there than be left with only Aunt Jinsie to care for him.

It had been agreed in council by the writers of the letters, that they would give Mr. Bloss three days' grace before proceeding to harsher measures. They attended church on the Sunday in order that it might not be said of them that they kept away because they were ashamed of themselves, or afraid of Mr. Bloss. Nothing happened on Monday, and Mr. Bloss began to think that, seeing the firmness of his attitude, his angry parishioners would cease from troubling him. But on Tuesday morning a gentle knock came to the front door, which—the hour being too early for callers—Mrs. Bloss opened herself, in her wrapper and curl papers. She turned pale when she saw Colonel Haverstock, and behind him Mr. Macfarlane, Mr. Macgregor, Huish, and Raine. She could hardly answer when the Colonel in

his usual calm manner asked for Mr. Bloss. The Colonel was always deferential to ladies, nor did he abate one jot of his deference on this occasion. And the younger men, moved perhaps by his example, were more deferential in manner than else they might have been to a lady who was tolerated rather than beloved in Harmonia.

Mrs. Bloss managed to show them into the parlour, and went to tell her husband.

Mr. Bloss had not expected that his adversaries would come to besiege him in his own castle.

"I suppose I shall have to see them," he said.

"Of course you will! What are you going to do about it?"

"That depends on the spirit in which they come. If they come in a spirit of conciliation——"

"Not much," his wife interrupted contemptuously. "They have come determined that you shall back down. Why else should they come at all?"

"I ain't a-going to back down."

"Well, just listen to me for a minute. You talk big about there being other places besides Harmonia, but you do not seem to remember that it will not help you with the bishop for you to be at loggerheads with all Harmonia. And that's what it will come to. I want you just to remember that."

With this warning Mrs. Bloss took herself off to the kitchen regions, and Mr. Bloss, after a moment's consideration, proceeded to the parlour.

"There has been, unfortunately,"—the Colonel began when the usual greetings had been exchanged—"a misunderstanding between you and these gentlemen, and I

have been requested to speak with a view to clearing it up. Perhaps you would like some friend of your own to be present. If so, we will adjourn and meet again when and wherever it may be convenient to you. You must feel, of course, as much as I do, that it is of the greatest consequence that there should be no discordance between the clergyman and his flock."

"Of course we all agree to that," said Mr. Bloss. "But when offence does come, woe is to him through whom it cometh."

"Undoubtedly," said the Colonel. "Might I ask you to name a friend and a time for our meeting? I come in no unfriendly spirit, Mr. Bloss; and there is not the slightest disposition to catch you unawares. I take this view myself: that you were perhaps stirred up by the bishop to an excess of zeal, which when you come to look at it calmly, you might possibly regret."

"I have endeavoured to do my duty," was Mr. Bloss's reply. "I am by no means prepared to admit that I have exceeded it. Not by *no* means," he repeated with emphasis.

The Colonel paused. "Then we had better wait until you have some friend on your side to discuss the matter. Whom do you feel inclined to name?"

Mr. Bloss was silent for a moment. Major Forepaw's name was the first which occurred to him; but the Major had shown himself such a Gallio in this matter that he had doubts whether he should do himself any good by requesting him to act as his friend. Mr. Ellacombe he thought might be trusted. But, alas! he was not a church member.

At last Mr. Bloss spoke. They had all waited very patiently while he was—as they supposed—coming to a decision as to the person he would name; and now, as he prefaced his speech with a loud clearing of the throat, they all pricked up their ears to hear what he was going to say.

"Well, Colonel," he began, "on consideration, sir, it don't seem to me as if any good was to be got by discussing this matter. I am not prepared to admit that I exceeded my duty."

"But, Mr. Bloss—" the Colonel began.

"I will say this," Mr. Bloss continued, interrupting the Colonel. "If the gentlemen to whom I addressed a remonstrance and"—here the big words rolled very full and round out of the depths of Mr. Bloss's throat—"and issued a prohibition—if they are prepared to make reparation—that is to enter into an undertaking to offend no more, then, in that case, I presume I shall be justified in—in rescinding the prohibition."

If it be hardly possible to convey to the reader the warmth and comfort which Mr. Bloss's big words were to himself as he rolled them forth, it is equally difficult to convey an adequate idea of the feelings of those of his hearers to whom they were specially addressed.

"By—Jove!" Huish exclaimed, and tightened his hold on his riding whip. He was in the act of starting from his chair, but Raine laid his hand on his arm and made a mute sign towards the Colonel. Huish understood that it was his duty to let the Colonel speak, and sank back in his chair wiping his heated brow, and muttering to himself, "By Jove!"

The two Scotchmen had sat while the rector was

speaking, anxiously attentive at first, then perplexed and lowering; then as Mr. Bloss proceeded to speak of their making reparation, their countenances wore an expression of blank amazement for one instant; the next, they smiled.

Then Mr. Macgregor broke out into laughter. "Reparation!" was all he said; and Huish said again, in his most emphatic tones, "By—Jove!"

"The contention on our side," said the Colonel, "is this: that you owe reparation for a regrettable misapprehension, expressed in—in a regrettable manner."

"I have said all I mean to say," said Mr. Bloss.

"Excuse me if I say that I do not think the matter can be passed over as you propose," said the Colonel.

"Certainly not." These were the first words Mr. Macfarlane had spoken. "I say for myself, certainly not." And the other three echoed the last words; Huish adding his invariable expletive, "By Jove."

"You see," said the Colonel. "Surely, in the interests of peace and good feeling, it would be better to name a friend with whom we could talk over things a little, so that we might come to some agreement."

"I have said all I mean to say," was Mr. Bloss's answer.

"Then," said the Colonel, "we need not trespass on your time any further." He rose and offered his hand as he spoke: but the others got themselves out of the room and out of the house without any ceremonious leavetaking.

Mrs. Bloss was too eager to know the result of the interview to wait till her husband might choose to tell her. As soon as she saw from the cookhouse door the

last of the five men disappear beyond the boundary of the parsonage lot, she rushed to her husband's study. He was already seated at his desk.

"I cannot be disturbed now," he said.

"But I want to know how you've fixed it."

"It is fixed just precisely where it was before, if that is what you want to know."

"You didn't back down?"

"You bet I didn't."

"Were they very mad?"

"I don't suppose they were particularly pleased. But I care very little whether they were pleased or not. They knew they had a bad cause."

"What will they do now, I wonder," said Mrs. Bloss with a sigh.

"They can do anything they like. I am going to write to the bishop. Now, Araminta, you really must leave me to write my letter."

Mrs. Bloss rose slowly. "Well," she said with another sigh, "I'm glad they didn't shoot you or do anything mean."

"Shoot me! You foolish woman! A clergyman is perfectly safe everywhere."

"A clergyman has been shot in the back before now."

"It is not the English way to shoot a man in the back. I'll say that for them, if they are a stiffnecked lot. They don't shoot a man in the back."

Mrs. Bloss went away relieved as to the danger of bodily damage to her lord, but still miserable when she thought of the ultimate results to his pocket. The more she thought of this, the more it seemed necessary that she should do something. She felt however that

before she commenced an independent course of action, she must make sure that Mr. Bloss was not going to move in the matter himself. She was quite aware that if he could be induced to move in the direction she desired, it was better that she should remain in the background.

Mr. Bloss had had less trouble with his letter to the bishop than he had ordinarily with his sermons. He was roused, he felt like a victor, and the sense of victory had been a mental stimulus. He appeared at the dinner table alert, almost smiling, instead of dull, and heavy, and—oh that such a word should be written of one who had professed himself called to save souls!—cross: and never so cross as when he was, as his wife phrased it, "fixing" his next Sunday's sermon.

"You can see what I have said to the bishop," he remarked. "I have not closed the letter yet."

"I don't care to see it," said Mrs. Bloss in a spiritless manner. "I don't doubt you'll make it all right with the bishop. It isn't that which troubles me."

"I'm afraid you stand in need of more faith, my dear."

"I reckon I do. Perhaps you'll need more, too, before you are through."

"Let us hope it will be supplied to us according to our needs," said Mr. Bloss. And for a few moments he said nothing more, for there was a large piece of roast shote on his plate, and in Mr. Bloss's opinion, the curse on lukewarmness was as applicable to meats as to men.

"Don't you think it would be as well that you should speak to Major Forepaw?" asked Mrs. Bloss when dinner was ended.

"Major Forepaw! What should I speak to Major Forepaw about?" said Mr. Bloss sharply.

"Well, if it were but to see how the wind blows. You had better believe me when I tell you I feel sure some mischief is brewing. There hasn't been a soul inside this house ever since you sent those letters."

"I am by no means pleased by the way the Major has behaved. If we do stay on here, I shall hope to have a churchwarden who will not fail me when I am in a hard place, as he has done."

Mrs. Bloss said no more, but dressed herself, and quietly slipped out,—trembling lest she should meet Mrs. Macgregor, or worse still Mrs. Macfarlane—and presently found herself on the stair leading to the Major's office. The Major jumped up when he saw a lady open the door in answer to his unceremonious invitation to enter. He was in no very good humour, for that morning one of the personally conducted had loudly disputed both his facts and his figures, and had departed declaring Harmonia a swindle. Another of the personally conducted had failed to keep his appointment, and the Major was feeling as an angler does when a big fish that he has been playing with his utmost skill breaks away within an instant of his landing him. That fish was gone. Perhaps he was gone with the hook in his mouth; but he was gone. And he would tell all the other fish. So the Major did not feel inclined to extend a cordial welcome to his present visitor.

However, a lady was a lady, so the Major could do no less than jump up and offer her a chair and inquire after her health. Then to save time he took a fresh quid, and asked in what way he could serve her.

"Well, Major, I'm just worried to death," said Mrs. Bloss.

"Wal, I do admire!" said the Major. "Why, Mis' Bloss, you didn't ought to have a worry in the world. You're one of those ladies that ought to have a good time all the time."

"Perhaps I should if there was nobody to worry me," said Mrs. Bloss. "I suppose you've heard all about the trouble between my husband and those gentlemen."

"Wal, yes, madam, I have heard of it, certainly," said the Major.

"I suppose there's a good deal of feeling about it?"

"Wal, there is considerable, I should say. Macfarlane is hopping mad."

"There now!—I knew it!—" Mrs. Bloss gasped.

"And as for that young English fellow, one would think that a yellow jacket had been going for him. Looks just at present as if he was going for the yellow jacket."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Bloss. That an unimportant person like Huish should get angry did not disturb her very much.

"And," pursued the Major, "as for Mr. Macgregor, he don't say much, but I vow I'd rather have to do with a man that talks a deal when he's mad, than with a man that bottles it all up. Now, I guess Macgregor is bottling it all up," said the Major, cutting into the lid of his desk with his pocket knife. "That's what he's doing, ma'am."

Mrs. Bloss hid her face in her handkerchief. "Major," she said, "Mis' Macgregor and Mis' Macfarlane are the

best friends we've got in Harmonia, and I don't care who knows it."

"Humph!" said the Major. "Well, it's no use your distressing yourself, madam. I'm sure I'm as sorry as I can be. You see, I was not consulted. If I'd been consulted—"

"Oh, yes, I know, I know," Mrs. Bloss sobbed. "But you see, there was the bishop's letter, and my husband thought he was bound to do something. And you know that young Englishman has been seen tight before now, and Mr. Macgregor too, if all that's said is true. But then—to think of such a misunderstanding with Mr. Macfarlane!—that's worse than anything. I'm quite free to confess that the whole thing was mismanaged from beginning to end. But then, my husband is perfectly sure he has done his duty, and says that the bishop is bound to support him."

"Of course, if Mr. Bloss feels that—" the Major began.

"But what's the good of the bishop's support?" said Mrs. Bloss, wiping her eyes. "Moral support, I suppose he'd call it. And there are such a lot of English here, and they all stick up to each other so!—What's the good of the bishop's moral support if the Macgregors and the Macfarlanes leave the church, and a lot more leave to show they take sides with them? If they go, that means money out of pocket for us. Is the bishop going to make it up to us?"

"Wal, madam, I should say not," said the Major with a smile.

"Of course he won't! Why should he? He'd just advise Mr. Bloss to resign, that's all."

"Yes, madam, that is what he would likely do."

"Oh dear!" cried Mrs. Bloss, "if Mr. Bloss had but waited till he saw them rolling in the gutter!—That's what I told him."

"It would have been better, perhaps."

"Of course it would! Then they could not have said a word, you see. But oh!—Major, do say you'll help us out of this, some way or another."

"But, madam, what is a physician to do when the patient won't call him in? I'm exactly in that position myself."

There was a pause; then Mrs. Bloss said, "I shouldn't wonder but those two were tight, do you know."

"We have Mr. Bloss's word for it, ma'am. I didn't see them myself," said the Major, who was not going to be entrapped into any admission.

"Well, Major, do you mean to say you ain't going to move a finger to help us out of this?" and Mrs. Bloss's handkerchief went up to her eyes again.

The Major was at his wits' end. He would rather at anytime have had to face a rattlesnake than a crying woman, and it was terribly inconvenient having the woman here just at this moment when he was busy and bothered with his own concerns. Add to this, that Mrs. Bloss was not a pretty woman now, whatever she might have been when she was Miss Araminta B. Thompson. Her sallow face, distorted with emotion and stained with tears, was not a pleasant sight. The Major got up and went to the window. Standing there, he was at least as far from the rector's wife as the four walls of the room would allow.

"How am I to help a man that wont't be helped?" said he.

"Ah, that's just it," said Mrs. Bloss behind her handkerchief.

"If 'twas only those two, he might let the thing slide. It would slide anyway. But there's Macfarlane! —'Twas a mistake, his using Macfarlane's name like that. I don't mind saying it to you ma'am, in confidence. 'Twas a mistake."

"I wish you could bring him round to your view," said Mrs. Bloss. "But he's so —" "mulish" was the most appropriate word, but she replaced it by a euphemism—"he is so firm. You don't know how firm Mr. Bloss can be. I'm sure I don't see what is to be the end of all this, or what is to become of us." And Mrs. Bloss wept afresh.

"Wal, ma'am," said the Major, "if I see my way to doing anything, you may depend on me to do it."

Mrs. Bloss got up and shook out her draperies.

"Oh, I'm quite sure you'll be able to do something, and I'm ever so much obliged to you, Major. I am sure you will be able to influence Mr. Bloss." She thrust her damp handkerchief into her pocket, and seized her fan and her parasol. She was in at least as great a hurry to be gone, as the Major was for her to go. She feared to stay an instant longer lest he might say some word to modify, if not annul, his promise.

"I should have supposed that your influence with Mr. Bloss would be the greatest, if you chose to bring it to bear," said the Major, as he handed her down stairs.

"La, Major, how you talk! My influence, indeed! I don't pretend to have any." Then, conscious that she had made a damaging admission, she added hastily, "About parish matters I mean, of course.—Well, you'll

come and see us soon, won't you?" she said as she stood on the doorstep.

The Major went back to his desk and chewed viciously. He had slammed the door after him with energy, and presently there was a knock. He jumped up and opened it. "Why, it's you," he said, seeing Mr. Macfarlane.

"Who else?" said the other pleasantly, "I thought you had somebody on very particular business, seeing the door shut."

"Wal, I have had somebody. Don't you feel the room damp?"

"No!" said Mr. Macfarlane.

"Mis' Bloss was here a while ago in her best bonnet, and crying fit to break her heart."

"Crying, was she? I hope you went the right way to comfort her, Major."

"I tell you, Macfarlane, I wonder I hadn't let myself drop from that window. However, she dried up and went, just in time. I wonder if she cries that way at home. If she does, Bloss must need an umbrella powerful bad."

"I guess Bloss knows how to manage her."

"Manage her!" the Major shuddered. "Tell you, if I'd a wife like that, I'd run away, sir. That's what I'd do. I'd go across the Rockies sooner than stand that handkerchief business. I don't much notice women's looks myself, but Lor', if she only knew how she disfigured herself!" The Major threw himself back and began to laugh.

"She's got sense enough to see how mulish Bloss is. Mulish! Mulish ain't a circumstance to it."

"He may be as mulish as he likes," said Mr. Macfarlane, "but he'll find his mulishness won't answer with me."

"Then you ain't going to let the matter slide?"

"I'll let it slide after he's apologised in a proper manner."

"Wal, I don't blame you," said the Major. And then they addressed themselves to their own business.

In a few days Mr. Bloss heard again from the bishop; and when Mrs. Bloss saw the heavy letter, she was divided between hope and fear as to the contents. To the surprise of both herself and her husband, three enclosures came out of the envelope, besides the sheet of paper in the bishop's handwriting.

Mrs. Bloss read these, one after another, while Mr. Bloss read his letter. They were respectively from Huish, Mr. Macfarlane, and Mr. Macgregor, complaining of the usage they had received from Mr. Bloss, and threatening an action for slander unless a full and prompt apology were made.

Mr. Bloss sat for a moment looking on the ground with an angry frown. "I think I never met with anything so mean in all my life," he said.

"He doesn't support you?" cried Mrs. Bloss.

"Not one bit."

"I knew he wouldn't! I knew you'd have to bear the brunt of it all," she said, taking the letter to read for herself.

"It's mean all round," said Mr. Bloss. "They never said one word about an action for slander to me, do you see, before they wrote to the bishop."

"But—Colonel Haverstock wanted to talk things

over; or wanted you to name a friend to talk things over with him,—didn't he? Oh, why didn't you name the Major or somebody?"

"I believe that was part of the plot. They knew that the Major was lukewarm and didn't want to have a word to say one way or the other. They knew that I should have a difficulty in naming any one else. Why couldn't he have said what their intentions were straight out?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Bloss dejectedly. She went to her room and put on her wrapper. Her head had begun to ache from the moment of seeing the bishop's letter, and the reading of it had thoroughly prostrated her. Like many nervous women who prefer to live in darkened rooms when they ought to be enjoying fresh air and sunlight, Mrs. Bloss had just enough imagination to conjure up future calamities; and as she sat with her head in her hands, she seemed to see herself, her husband and child, driven penniless from Harmonia, to begin the world anew among strangers; with the stigma attaching to her husband that he was a man who could not live at peace with his parishioners.

"Do go and see the Major, and try and smooth matters over," she said, when her husband happened to come in. "This business will be the death of me."

"If you really wish it so very much," said Mr. Bloss, who himself had had within the last half hour some secret misgivings that as matters were going it would be better for him to agree with his adversaries quickly. Miss Luttrell might be a tower of strength, yet even she was not to be depended on to pay the costs of the defendant in three separate actions for slander. And as

for the rest of the congregation, with the one exception perhaps of the old Cornish Methodist, they would all feel delighted that their shepherd should have a fall. Why, he asked himself, why had his lot been cast among such a stiffnecked generation? There were parishioners who loved their shepherd, who were gentle, biddable white sheep, who came at his call and paid his lawyer's bills for him to the tune of many thousands of dollars. To what end had he been brought to rule over such as these, who were as ungovernable as goats, and who surely would have their portion with the goats one day!

"If you really wish it so very much—" he said again, as if he were allowing himself to be persuaded against his will.

"It is the only thing to do, that I see."

"Well, I'll think about it."

He went out intending to see the Major before he had left his office. The Major, who knew the contents of the letters which had been written to the bishop, was not surprised to see him.

"Want to speak a word, if you'll just step in," the Major said.

The tone the Major took was not pleasant to Mr. Bloss. There was not a shade of deference in it. There was, instead, a quasi-military peremptoriness most unbecoming in a person who stood in the relation of churchwarden to himself. However, churchwarden he was and churchwarden he would remain till the time came round for the election of another. So Mr. Bloss preceded the Major up stairs to that office whence so many of the personally conducted had departed, leaving their wool behind them.

"Business lively, eh?" said the rector. The floor indeed bore the marks of many feet, and the negro office-sweeper had not yet come in.

"So, so," said the Major shortly. "I haven't a minute to spare, but I just want to tell you that those fellows have been here to-day, and they are going to bring three several actions for slander against you, unless you fix things right. You can do as you like about it, of course."

Mr. Bloss cleared his throat and spoke in his most deliberate manner. "H—m. An action for slander—is—a—very—serious—thing, Major."

"Some folks have found it a mighty serious thing, I believe," said the Major with cruel flippancy. "I ain't tried it myself. When I do, I'll let you know how pleasant it is; and how cheap."

"Those gentlemen might find it serious," said Mr. Bloss.

"*You* might find it serious, you mean," said the Major.

"I might: but yet I might not."

"Oh, Lor'! What is the good of this fooling? Do you mean to tell me you are going to let this thing go on?" and the Major jumped up and began pacing the room angrily.

"If I regarded myself alone, sir," said Mr. Bloss, "I should let them bring their actions and defy them, sir. And so I would but for Mrs. Bloss."

"Mis' Bloss has a heap o' sense," was the Major's retort.

"Mrs. Bloss, sir, is prostrate at this moment from worry. Mrs. Bloss is worrying herself ill over this business; over the meanness of the way I have been treated, and the cowardice of those who ought to be

our friends, but who turn out to be mere snakes in the grass; mere snakes in the grass, sir."

"If you mean me, I ain't going to take that, clergyman or no clergyman," said the Major quietly, but with a movement of his hand towards his hip pocket as if he had a loaded pistol handy.

"Oh no, not you, of course not," said the rector hastily. "I alluded to—in fact—to other persons."

"All right. Wal, those fellows will be here to-morrow. I suppose I can tell them to go ahead with their actions."

The Major as he spoke began to put back on their shelf some books on agriculture and mineralogy which he had consulted during the day. As he did so he whistled, "My Maryland," as though to show that he considered the interview at an end.

"You are in such a hurry, and so very impetuous," said Mr. Bloss, "that you will not give me time to say a word."

The Major looked at his watch, "I can give you exactly five minutes."

"What do you advise as churchwarden?"

The Major drew a long breath and uttered a groan. "My advice! Haven't I advised you, and you wouldn't listen."

"But the circumstances are slightly altered."

"Are they? Then I don't see it. Why, Mr. Bloss, you haven't a leg to stand upon, and you never had. I tell you once for all, you'd better back down, *good*. What's the use of fooling?"

"We are all liable to err. I may of course have committed an error in judgment."

"You may bet your bottom dollar you did."

"Well, I'm prepared to say as much. For the sake of peace. Simply and solely for the sake of peace, Major. And—for Mrs. Bloss's sake, of course. I don't know as anything else would move me from the position I have taken all along."

"Fix it any way you like, as long as you do fix it. That's what I say," said the Major.

"I'll write to these gentlemen to-night or to-morrow," said Mr. Bloss rising.

"They'll be here to-morrow to know what you are going to do about it."

"I will send the letters to the post-office."

"Do as you like about that," said the Major.

Mr. Bloss went home, and comforted his wife by the assurance that the unpleasant business was virtually settled, and that, too, without any great discomfort to himself.

"Then you have apologised?" Mrs. Bloss sighed, raising her head slightly from the pillow.

"I have not; and I don't intend to," said he. "I shall express my regret, and so forth. Oh, it will be all right. But I can tell you I wouldn't even go as far as that, but for the bishop's letter. I consider the bishop has treated me very badly; very badly indeed. First he stirs me up to action, and then he backs down. Every candid person would see it in that light. I am not well pleased with the bishop's behaviour."

"Much he'll care," sighed Mrs. Bloss, turning her face to the wall. "Well, I suppose there will be an end of the thing now, anyhow. We sha'n't be starved out of Harmonia, or driven out without a crust to bless

ourselves with. That's what I've been thinking of all this afternoon."

"It never would have come to anything as bad as that. But now I'll go and write those letters."

"Oh yes, do, for heaven's sake! I shall be so glad when I know they are gone," said the poor woman.

Mr. Bloss spent the rest of the evening in his study. He wrote the three letters which were to prevent the three actions for slander: and he also wrote to the bishop, telling him that the dispute had been settled amicably.

He sent these letters early on the morrow; and was able to tell his wife that he had done so, when she came out of her room long after breakfast was over. He went out, telling her not to wait dinner for him. He was going to some people who lived at the farthest end of the settlement, and if on his return he happened to strike Mr. Ellacombe's house about dinner time, he should get his dinner there.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when Major Forepaw's boy came with a message to Mr. Bloss to step down to the office. This message was brought to Mrs. Bloss, who was seated in the parlour rocking herself languidly.

"He say, mek haste, 'cause de gentemens is waiting," said Aunt Jinsie. "What I tell him, Miss Araminty?"

"He ain't at home. You know that as well as I do," said Mrs. Bloss. But as she spoke Mr. Bloss walked in.

"Major Forepaw has sent a message to you to go to the office," said his wife.

"Major Forepaw? Say that I cannot come just now," said Mr. Bloss. "Am I to be at Major Forepaw's beck and call, I wonder?" he said to his wife, as he threw himself into a chair.

"Dat boy say two ob de gentemens is just as mad!" —said Aunt Jinsie, coming back when she had delivered Mr. Bloss's message.

Mrs. Bloss put her hands up to her head. "It's that business, Mr. Bloss. That business is not finished yet."

"It is finished, as far as I am concerned," said he. Yet his countenance was not devoid of uneasiness, and in his mind he was very uneasy indeed.

He did not feel easier when shortly after a note was brought to him, which he opened and read with his wife looking over his shoulder.

It was as follows :—

"MR. BLOSS,—This is to let you know that the gentlemen to whom you wrote have come to complain to me that they have been fooled by you, and they are not going to stand any more of it. They demanded a written apology for your unfounded accusation of drunkenness; and in Mr. Macfarlane's case, for your unwarrantable use of his name. You have sent no apology whatever, and as you gave me to understand yesterday that you were going to do so, I consider that I have been insulted. Unless this thing is settled right away, I shall write to the bishop. If you have any regard for your own interests, you will at once write what will be felt satisfactory by these gentlemen. I told you yesterday you would have to back down, good, and you will have to do it.

"Respectfully,

"J. FOREPAW.

"P.S.—You had better follow the messenger sharp."

Mrs. Bloss sank back in her chair and rocked herself with the energy of despair.

"You'll have to do as the Major says. There's no getting out of it. Oh!—Why did you ever take this thing in hand?"

"We may thank the bishop for all this," said Mr. Bloss. "Major Forepaw would never dare write a letter like this did he not know that the bishop does not support me as he ought."

"You'll have to go!"

"H—m, I suppose I must."

"And I shouldn't wonder if they were all armed. If you had but a pistol!—"

"It wouldn't look well for a clergyman to carry arms. And if I had a pistol it might go off in my pocket."

"That's so," said Mrs. Bloss who was crying from nervousness.

"Why do the heathen rage so furiously?" observed Mr. Bloss. "Ah, why? Who can tell? But I do not think they will venture to lift a hand—no—nor a finger—against the Lord's anointed. Have no fear for me, Araminta. You see if they so much as touch me, I can bring an action for assault and battery. I don't think they would like that. It would look so very bad. Assaulting their clergyman!—It would tell against them, and against Harmonia. I almost wish they'd try it on. I'd make Forepaw wish he hadn't written me in that style." He twisted the Major's note up as he spoke, and threw it into the fireplace. Then he set his hat carefully on his head and went out.

When he reached the Major's office, he found

Mr. Macfarlane, Mr. Macgregor and Huish assembled together with the Major; and Raine, who had accompanied his chum, partly for the fun of the thing, and partly to restrain Huish's vehement desire to thrash Mr. Bloss. As Mr. Bloss entered, the Major, who had been looking out of window, seated himself at his desk.

"Evenin', Mr. Bloss," he said. "Take a chair." Mr. Bloss made a stiff bow, and taking a chair, seated himself with silent dignity.

The Major rose, with a paper in his hand. "We just want you to sign this here and be done with the business. These gentlemen are sorter pushed, and ain't got any time for fooling."

"I wrote these gentlemen yesterday what I conceived best under the circumstances," said Mr. Bloss. "If they ain't satisfied, I'm sorry, but I don't see what more I can do."

Mr. Macgregor jumped up. "Then I'll try to make you see, sir. I look on the letter you wrote yesterday as an insult, and no apology at all. There isn't a syllable of apology in it. You justify yourself, sir, instead of apologising. You were called upon to apologise for a false accusation. You can't get away from that."

"I said that there might have been an error in judgment on my part, and that, under the circumstances, and with a view to peace, I withdrew the prohibition I had laid upon you both. What more could be required of me?" said Mr. Bloss, looking round upon his adversaries.

Raine could not but feel a certain admiration for

the tenacity with which Mr. Bloss made his stand. "The beggar has some pluck," he muttered to Huish.

"I do not quite see my way to signing anything like this," said Mr. Bloss, laying the paper on the table. "I don't see that it is to be expected of me that I should put myself in a wrong position."

"By Jove, you didn't mind putting us in a wrong position," Huish exclaimed. "Well, I don't care. I shall instruct my lawyer to proceed at once. I don't care a hang for the expense, for my father will back me up, and I'll carry it through if I have to appeal to the Supreme Court. I give you fair notice, Mr. Bloss. Don't you go saying that I did anything underhand. That's not my way. I give you fair notice, mind," Huish cried excitedly.

Mr. Bloss looked at him steadily. "All that is just boys' talk," he said. "It don't amount to anything."

"Oh, by Jove!—" Huish cried starting up. But Raine took his arm and drew him out of the room. "Don't you see he's trying to make you lose your temper?" he remonstrated. "He will be saying you are tipsy, next. Do keep calm, for heaven's sake! No, don't go back. You'll only spoil everything." Huish let himself be persuaded, and they stood in the doorway and looked up and down the street while the discussion proceeded in the office upstairs.

What Raine had predicted was precisely what Mr. Bloss did say. "Is that young man tipsy?" he asked, when the door was shut upon Raine and Huish.

The Major and the other two exchanged glances, but made him no answer.

"Well, I'll have to go to law if this matter can't be

settled any other way," said Mr. Macfarlane. "I don't want to bluster and brag, Mr. Bloss. That is not my line. But backing down is not in my line, either. I'm bound to let the bishop know that I have had no alternative but to bring an action."

"Neither have I," said Mr. Macgregor.

Mr. Bloss reflected a moment. The paper he was called upon to sign was a very bitter pill. Never in his life had he been forced to swallow anything so bitter. But, should he sign it, the bitterness would be over as the bitterness of the pill is over—ordinarily—as soon as it is swallowed. And—should he not sign it, he would be the defendant in three separate actions for slander, besides having to bear the acridity of the unceasing refrain, "I told you so!" from Mrs. Bloss.

"I object to the wording of that paper," he said. "It's preposterous, that I should be expected to sign anything you choose to draw up. I ought at least to have an opportunity of consulting a friend first."

"You had the opportunity given you, and you refused it," said Mr. Macfarlane.

"That's a fact," said the Major.

"I did what I considered best, at the time," said Mr. Bloss. "Of course I had no idea, then, of the extremely unfriendly, litigious spirit which animated these gentlemen."

"Shucks!" said the Major, drawing the rejected paper towards him. "What word do you object to in particular?"

"I object to the word 'malicious.' You cannot accuse me of malice when I was executing what I conceived to be my dooty."

Major Forepaw consulted with the others, and then said,—"Wal, strike out 'malicious!' Now, will that suit you?"

Mr. Bloss read the paper again. "H—m, h—m," he muttered to himself. He was in two minds, even then, about signing, though the objectionable word had been struck out. But there was wafted across his inmost consciousness that still, small voice, "I told you so," and he signed slowly, lingeringly; but he signed at last, the three forms of apology which he had declared he never would sign.

"Wal," said the major, "I reckon you can shake hands all round now, gentlemen. The lawyers have lost money by this: but we needn't cry about their losses if we can keep the dollars in our own pockets, eh? Mr. Huish, won't you walk up, sir!" he said raising his voice.

Huish rushed up on hearing the Major's voice. "I'm quite willing to shake hands, I'm sure," he said, when the Major handed him the paper Mr. Bloss had just signed, and intimated what was expected of him.

"Of course I'm willing to shake hands," he said, suiting the action to the word. "Awfully sorry all this should have occurred, Mr. Bloss. Hope it won't happen again. I dare say you supposed you were in the right. But I assure you, 'pon my word and honour, you never made a greater mistake in your life."

Mr. Bloss looked at him as he blurted forth his words in an excited manner, and his look seemed to repeat the question he had asked a few minutes before, "Is that young man tipsy?"

He was perfectly sober; as sober as Mr. Bloss himself. But he was so excited and talked so fast when he

got into the street, that Raine was glad to get him inside the grocery, where he at once proceeded to show everybody the paper signed by Mr. Bloss.

"I have just one thing to say, Forepaw," Mr. Macgregor remarked, as he folded up the apology, and put it in his pocket-book. "Don't consider me a member of the congregation from this time forward, if you please."

"Wal," said the major. "That's as you please, sir. If there's been crow eaten this evening, you haven't had the eating of it."

"I don't feel called upon to sit under a minister that eats crow," said Mr. Macgregor. And with that, he too departed.

Mr. Bloss walked with his usual slow deliberation to his house. He went in and sat down in his usual seat and said nothing. He looked like a man who had spent an hour in the dentist's chair. His wife guessing how it was with him, rose from her sofa and prepared him a toddy with her own hands.

"I wish I'd given you one before you went," she said. "But I was so nervous, and my head was in such a state, that I forgot all about it. Well, it's over now, I do hope. Were they very violent? You look used up. Take another sip. You'll feel better presently."

Mr. Bloss took another sip, and another, and emptied the glass.

"They are a stiff-necked and perverse generation," he said as he drained the last drop and gave the glass back to his wife. "I had to do their bidding. What could one man do among so many? But let them take heed. They may have a fall yet.—This is as clear a

case of 'bull-dozing' as ever happened, Araminta, and I shall take care to let it be known for such."

"Better let it slide," said Mrs. Bloss. "What can you do, if the bishop don't support you?"

"Ah, the bishop! Well, I shall bide my time." And thus ended Mr. Bloss's second attempt to enforce ecclesiastical discipline in his parish.

CHAPTER XIX.

SYLVIA WILL NOT TRY.

Mr. Bloss was a stupid man; but he was wise enough to know that the apology he had signed would be likely to tell terribly against him, and to take his measures accordingly. It was not very difficult. He had but to pronounce the word "bull-dozing," and at once the wave of sympathy swept to his side. The Colonel, Mr. Denning, and others who had hitherto believed that Mr. Bloss had acted with singular want of judgment, began to think that there was something more than they had been allowed to know by the aggrieved parties. As for Sylvia, she shuddered when she heard the ominous and fateful word. She declared to Miss Priest that if this was the way people behaved to their minister, they might as well be in Mississippi. She wished she had never come to Harmonia or allowed herself to get interested in the people. They would be having the Ku-Klux next, with its masks and disguises and revolvers and cowhide whips. Her sympathies went out without stint to Mrs. Bloss when she described what had been her fears for her husband's safely. A Baptist minister had been shot in the back not long

before, in a western frontier town, because he had preached against drunkenness; and the jury on the inquest had brought in a unanimous verdict of accidental death. Mrs. Bloss had hardly believed her husband when he had assured her that it was not the English way to shoot a man in the back. She supposed that if they "felt like" it they would do it. Sylvia was sorry for the poor nervous frightened woman, and tried to minimise her fears. She did not indeed suppose Mr. Bloss to be in imminent danger; but that perhaps was because she felt conscious that Mr. Bloss was a person who could very well be spared. Even if war has been declared from the purest motives, no gratitude is ever felt to the side which declares it; and the effect of Mr. Bloss's late crusade had been to destroy in a great degree the pleasantness of Sylvia's parties. Mrs. Macgregor and Mrs. Macfarlane let it be known that they would not meet Mr. and Mrs. Bloss. Sylvia ventured to hint that, whatever had been the cause of offence, Mr. Bloss had apologised: and she said something, too, about her house being neutral ground. But she was made to understand that she must choose between them and the Blosses. The Tregellases too, left off coming, and though the excuses made were unexceptional, Sylvia suspected that the real reason was their unwillingness to meet Mr. and Mrs. Bloss. In her trouble she took Mr. Garlick into her confidence. She had a great liking for Mr. Garlick, and forgave him for going about with his hat on the back of his head, because he had tastes which coincided with her own. They lent each other scientific books, and they had each undertaken an experiment with earthworms. To test the earthworms'

sensitiveness to musical sounds, Sylvia had sent to Baltimore for a piano. And it was a fine sight to see Mr. Garlick, note-book in hand, watching the behaviour of the earthworms in their pots, while Sylvia played grand marches and nocturnes. As for Mr. Garlick, he was sometimes pleased, and sometimes in despair, at the easy, comrade-like manner of Sylvia. He had been in despair for two days—the earthworm experiment required an interview every forty-eight hours or thereabouts—and then, just when he had come to the conclusion that he had better go away—Sylvia, instead of descanting on the ways of earthworms, began to descant on the ways of men.

"Every one seems ready to quarrel with me," she said, "because I choose to remain neutral. Even Mrs. Tregellas asks me whether I am not a Blossite. I have had half a mind to go away."

"Why don't you?" said Mr. Garlick.

"Because if I did I should never come back again. And that would be a confession that my coming here was a failure. Now if there is a thing I dislike it is failure."

"Most people dislike it."

"I am sure I dislike it more than anybody does," cried Sylvia. "Now, I have thought of something; but I cannot do it without your help."

"Command me," said Mr. Garlick.

Sylvia explained that she wished to give a dinner-party. "I want you to help me to keep the ball of conversation rolling. I'll manage the men, and you can manage the women."

"I? Good heavens, Miss Luttrell, whom do you take me for?"

"You can do it if you like. And you can be very amusing when you like. And you can be sarcastic. But you mustn't be that on this occasion, because Mrs. Macgregor would never understand it. You can help me to pour oil on these troubled waters. Now don't say you cannot, because I know you can. I know your character by this time."

"You alarm me," said Mr. Garlick.

"Will you help me?" said Sylvia.

"Will it be any good?"

"How can I tell that till I have tried?"

"And after all, are these people worth the trouble?"

"Yes," said Sylvia. "People are always worth trouble."

He reflected a moment. "You are right," he said. "I will help you, if you will take me into your service. I suppose you want me to keep your wild beasts from fighting while they feed."

Sylvia gave her dinner-party, and it was a great success. Harmonia left off sulking, and ceased to turn such a cold shoulder to the rectory people. Mr. Ellacombe was not in the quarrel, so he was not invited. He would have been shocked had he known that by Mr. Garlick's advice Sylvia had champagne at dinner, and that every one drank "Success to Harmonia." "It is an obsolete custom," Mr. Garlick said, "but it was a good one, that drinking of healths. It promoted good fellowship and good feeling, and I am sorry it has gone out."

It was not till afterwards—when by Sylvia's good offices people were once more willing to shake hands with Mr. Bloss—that Mr. Garlick told Sylvia his private opinion of the man.

"I consider him dangerous. A stupid man who believes himself to be infallible cannot but be dangerous."

"I am glad you did not tell me that before the dinner party," said Sylvia. "I should never have had the courage to ask you to help me."

This was said as they stood together looking at the earthworms.

"May I tell you something more?" said Mr. Garlick.

"Yes. What is it?"

He took both her hands and shook them. "I think you are very, very good," he said. He did not wait for a reply, but clapped his hat on the back of his head and walked away.

Sylvia watched him from the window. "I wish he would not wear his hat in that ridiculous way," she thought. "And his tie all under his ear! If I were his sister I would make him wear it straight. He shouldn't go about looking so crazy; it spoils him so."

The next visit Mr. Garlick paid to the earthworms Sylvia was away. She had desired Miss Priest to ask Mr. Garlick to stay to luncheon if she chose: and she did choose.

Mr. Garlick, who had come with the intention of asking Sylvia to marry him, was considerably taken aback when luncheon was over and she had not returned. He asked Miss Priest whether she had intended to come back, and Miss Priest could not tell: though, as soon as he had asked the question she began to suspect Sylvia had stayed away on purpose.

"I hope she is not offended," said Mr. Garlick.

"She is not apt to take offence; there's no one less so."

"She is a lovely character," said Mr. Garlick.

"There is considerable grit in Sylvy, if you mean that. When she makes up her mind to do a thing, she does it. She thought she'd like to go to New Athens, and she went. She thought she'd like to study medicine, and she studied it. She would be practising as a physician now, only she came into a lot of money."

"She is a wonderful creature, a charming creature," said Mr. Garlick.

"Well, why don't you tell her so?" said Miss Priest.

"I did want to speak a word yesterday, but—"

"Well, if you can't get out what it is you want to say, you don't expect her to say it for you, I presume," said Miss Priest.

"What do you think?"

"I don't think anything. I have heard her say you have brains, and that is more than she says of most men."

"Is that meant for encouragement?" said Mr. Garlick.

"It is the best I can do for you," said Miss Priest. "You see, Sylvy is not one of those that would be bettered by matrimony. She has plenty of money, and she don't need to look around and see if this one will do or that one."

Mr. Garlick, while questioning Miss Priest, had been drawing diagrams on a strip of linen which lay on the table. He drew a few more lines when she had finished speaking, and then threw down the pencil and went away. As soon as he was outside the door he came back again. "I forgot to shake hands," he said. "Good-bye. Tell her I shall be here to-morrow."

Miss Priest gave Mr. Garlick's message, and showed Sylvia the strip of linen which he had disfigured. "I don't know whether this is the way mathematicians write love-letters," she remarked.

Sylvia was vexed. "My new bureau cover that I had just begun to embroider!— I couldn't marry a man who would be so absent as that, even if he were twice as agreeable as Mr. Garlick is—sometimes."

Mr. Garlick was not at his ease when he came on the morrow. Sylvia remarked that the earthworms were ready to receive him; but he answered at random, and walked up and down the room with his hands behind him; and once he took up her scissors, and began to cut up her embroidery thread. Sylvia, with her needle-work in her hand, watched him, half amused and half vexed.

"If he thinks I am going to help him, he is very much mistaken," she thought. "How can a man be so eccentric!"

"You are cutting up all my thread," she said, when he had demolished half the skein. "Please don't."

Mr. Garlick threw down the scissors and came up to her.

"Sylvia, I want you to marry me."

"I cannot," said Sylvia.

"Why not? It would be an experiment, but I am sure it would succeed."

"I do not think it would."

"How can you tell?"

"We are not suited to each other."

"I have been studying your character, and I think you would suit me admirably."

"But you do not suit me," said Sylvia. "I like you as a friend, but that is all."

"Will you not try to love me?"

"No," said Sylvia calmly, "I do not wish to try."

He sat down in the nearest chair. "I suppose I had better go," he said.

"I do not wish you to go. Why cannot we be friends?"

Mr. Garlick shook his head. "I could not stay, after what you have said. I suppose I am presumptuous, but I think I could teach you to love me, if you would let me try. Think of it, Sylvia. In a year I will come back and ask you again."

He went away, and Sylvia was left reflecting on the perversity of men. He was just perfect as a friend, and the little dash of eccentricity was not objectionable, because it seemed to remove him from the category of possible lovers. And he had chosen to spoil everything by making love!

In a few days Sylvia received a note from Mr. Garlick, bidding her farewell. An expedition was being organised to explore an unknown river in Central America, and he was going to join it. "In a year I shall return,—" he wrote,—" and I shall ask you the same question I asked you the other day. Marriage is an experiment, but I feel sure that in our case the experiment would succeed." When Sylvia read this she resolved that she would not be at Harmonia when Mr. Garlick should return. She heard no more from him, but saw in the newspapers that the expedition had started.

It was not until after Mr. Garlick's departure that she became aware of the exceeding dulness of Harmonia.

She supposed it was the heat which made people dull, or the drought, which made them anxious. This was the third dry year, and this drought was worse than the two former ones. Her friends wrote to her from Newport and the White Mountains and other pleasant summer resorts, and wondered why she persisted in burying herself in such a place as Harmonia. It was not, however, till one of the negro servants threw down the table on which the pots of earthworms were, that she made up her mind to go north for the remainder of the summer. She said good-bye to the Harmonia people and promised to come back, though she did not feel quite sure that she would do so. She had done one good thing: she had smoothed down the jagged ends of the situation, as regarded the rector and his parishioners. In every other particular she was sensible that her Harmonia experiment was a failure. The people were as much in a rut as they were before she came. Her conversation parties had been a farce; she wondered what Margaret Fuller would have done in her place with such unpromising material to work upon. She was just enough to own—to herself at least—that if she had failed it was probably because she lacked some quality which Margaret Fuller had possessed.

She went to Newport; and as she stayed with friends instead of going to an hotel, she was spared the mortification of being regarded as an outsider, and could watch with amusement the unceasing efforts of the outsiders to push themselves into the inner circle, and the efforts quite as unceasing, of the inner circle to keep them out. Her friends regarded her as a sort of returned prodigal who was to be made much of. If it was ever a question

why she had gone to Harmonia, the answer was that a person so rich as Sylvia Luttrell could afford every kind of eccentricity.

It was very delightful, Sylvia confessed, to be once more "in the swim." It was ever so much more exhilarating, than trying to lift people out of their rut, or composing differences. She began to tire of this delight, however, before very long, and was thinking to what new place she could go, where she should find friends and acquaintances enough to keep her lively, when she saw in a newspaper a paragraph which once more set her thinking of Harmonia.

A disease which the doctors called by a newfangled name was decimating the infant settlement: those who could leave it had already left, there was suffering among the stock from the failure of the water supply, and some of the poorest settlers were in dire distress.

Sylvia, who was on the point of starting with a yachting party, asked Miss Priest to write to Dr. Bontecoe and send ten dollars from her for the sick people. She went off, in the expectation of enjoying herself; but Harmonia was in her mind, and though she was apparently as gay as the gayest, she was glad when the party broke up. When she returned with her friends she found Miss Priest with her trunk packed and her bonnet on ready to start off. "I was just waiting for you to come back," said Miss Priest. "Seems to me you won't want me as long as you stop here. I can't rest for thinking about those people, and I'm just going right down to Harmonia to see for myself what is the matter."

Sylvia stood abashed. "I am getting wicked and

selfish," she said, "that's what is the matter with me. If you will wait till the next train, I will go with you."

"Oh, I wouldn't trouble about them," said Miss Priest. "You are young yet, and if people don't have good times when they're young, when are they likely to get them? It is quite different with me, of course."

"Why should it be different? It shall not be different," said Sylvia.

Two days later they stopped on the little platform at Harmonia junction. The driver of the omnibus grinned and touched his hat to them. "Is you all come back, ladies?" he said.

They got down at Dr. Bontecoe's door. He was not in, and his tea-tray with a teapot full of cold tea stood on the table, as if he had been called out before he had had time to drink it. He came in after some time, and shook hands heartily. "So you have not forsaken us," he said.

Sylvia said that Miss Priest had come to help, and that she could not be left behind. What did the doctor want done, to begin with?

"Everything," said Dr. Bontecoe.

END OF VOL. II.

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS,
LONDON AND BUNGAY.

NEW NOVELS.

MARZIO'S CRUCIFIX. By F. Marion Crawford. 2 Vols. Globe 8vo. 12*s.*

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says :—"The workmanship of 'Marzio's Crucifix,' whether as a piece of narrative or as a study of character, is remarkably strong. It is certainly one of the ablest of Mr. Crawford's writings."

The *Scotsman* says:—"Some of the most exquisite studies of modern life that have been given to the public have been found in Mr. Crawford's novels. The latest of these, 'Marzio's Crucifix,' is charming .....The work is done with infinite skill, delicacy, and tenderness. No one who can appreciate high art in literature can fail to be delighted with it, for the story is powerful without any apparent effort. It is never crude, or rude, or weak.....The two volumes are charming."

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

MR. ISAACS. A Tale of Modern India. Crown 8vo. 4*s.* 6*d.*

DOCTOR CLAUDIUS. A True Story. Crown 8vo. 4*s.* 6*d.*

A ROMAN SINGER. Crown 8vo. 4*s.* 6*d.*

ZOROASTER. Crown 8vo. 6*s.*

A TALE OF A LONELY PARISH. Crown 8vo. 6*s.*

THE NEW ANTIGONE. A Romance. 3 Vols. Crown 8vo. 31*s.* 6*d.*

The *Academy* says :—"A very unconventional novel is 'The New Antigone,' and one written with marked ability and literary skill. It probes the new revolutionary doctrines of Free Love, Socialism, Nihilism, and so forth, to the core, and shows how utterly inadequate they are to satisfy the deeper cravings of human nature. .....We shall look with great interest to the next appearance of the anonymous author of 'The New Antigone.'"

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says :—"Hippolyta Valence, the New Antigone, from whom the book takes its name, is a poetically conceived and strongly drawn character, quite as romantic as her surroundings."

The *Scottish Leader* says :—"It is safe to assert that this book is not the production of a prentice hand. So much may be inferred, not merely from the enjoyable felicity of the style.....It is a book which not only feeds the reader's imagination, but appeals to his nobler sympathies and forces him to think. Of how many of our recent novels has it been possible to say as much as this?"

THE SECOND SON. By Mrs. Oliphant, Author of "The Curate in Charge." "A Country Gentleman," &c. 3 Vols. Crown 8vo. [*In the Press.*

MACMILLAN AND CO., LONDON.

NEW NOVELS.

HITHERSEA MERE. By Lady AUGUSTA NOEL, Author of "Wandering Willie," "From Generation to Generation," "Owen Gwynne's Great Work." 3 Vols. Crown 8vo. 31*s.* 6*d.*

The *Athenæum* says:—"Lady Augusta Noel has the gift of romance, and involves all her characters in an atmosphere of pleasant illusion which will be welcome to the majority of her readers. There is a quiet humour, too, in 'Hithersea Mere' which adds to its charm."

The *Scotsman* says:—"The story, which is easily told, is of considerable merit."

The *Dublin Evening Mail* says:—"'Hithersea Mere' will have many readers."

ISMAY'S CHILDREN. By the Author of "Hogan, M.P.," "Flitters, Tatters, and the Counsellor," "The Hon. Miss Ferrard." 3 Vols. Crown 8vo.

The *Athenæum* says:—"Among the contemporary chroniclers of the realities of Irish life the author of 'Hogan, M.P.' occupies a prominent place, and her latest venture will greatly enhance a deservedly high reputation. 'Ismay's Children' opens admirably and improves on closer acquaintance, being marked to a singular extent by a combination of qualities rare in female writers—strength, breadth of humour, and impartiality.....No one who is anxious to fathom the enigma of the Irish character will be deterred.....from the careful study of what we have no hesitation in pronouncing to be the most valuable and dispassionate contribution towards the solution of that problem which has been put forth in this generation in the domain of fiction. So remarkable and powerful a novel as 'Ismay's Children.'"

The *Scotsman* says:—"The evils of the old Irish land system, the relation between owner and tenant, so thoroughly different from those which subsist on this side the water, the inability of the farmers and labourers to comprehend why their old systems should be changed, and their unwillingness to adopt new methods, the pride of birth, which in certain circumstances promotes laziness and squalor; the lavish charity which is not incompatible with niggardliness; the impulsively unequal administration of justice by Irishmen—all these are brought out with such clearness and at the same time so naturally as to make it obvious that the author was long familiar with the society of which she writes."

The *St. James's Gazette* says:—"Read this work for an exposition of Irish life, Irish scenery, and character, and you will find both entertainment and instruction."

The *Literary World* says:—"'Ismay's Children' is interesting as giving some graphic pictures of Irish life in county Cork, and as throwing considerable light upon the agrarian grievances of the sister island."

Macmillan's 6s. Popular Novels. New Volumes.

SABINA ZEMBRA. By WILLIAM BLACK.

A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN. By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

A MODERN TELEMACHUS. By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.

CHANTRY HOUSE. By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.

THE COERULEANS: A Vacation Idyll. By H. S. CUNNINGHAM.

THE WOODLANDERS. By THOMAS HARDY.

NEÆRA: A Tale of Ancient Rome. By JOHN W. GRAHAM.

Macmillan's 2s. Novels. New Volume.

RAMONA: A Story. By HELEN JACKSON.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LONDON.